



ANTISLAVERY POLITICS IN ANTEBELLUM AND CIVIL WAR AMERICA

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Part I

(1831–1860)

1

A Movement is Born

A MOVEMENT IS BORN

Historians conventionally date the beginning of the abolitionist movement to January 1831 with the publication of the first issue of William Lloyd Garrison's newspaper *The Liberator*, based in Boston. There had been abolitionists ever since the American Revolution, particularly among the Society of Friends or the Quaker denomination. What separated the movement launched by Garrison from these earlier movements was its demand for immediate, rather than gradual, abolition and its refusal to have anything to do with slaveholders (slave owners).¹ A meeting in Boston in December 1831 led to the formation of the New England Anti-Slavery Society, which eventually became the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society (MASS)—a more accurate title—and its initial work in 1832. This in turn served as a model for other state abolitionist societies throughout the North. Finally, on December 4, 1833, the American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS) was founded by 28 abolitionists with Arthur Tappan as its first president and its headquarters in New York City. The AASS united regionally based societies in Boston, New York, and Cincinnati among other Eastern cities.² It also had its origins two years before in the work of a small group of abolitionist pioneers: The group established its own abolitionist newspaper, the *Emancipator*, in New York City under the editorship of Charles Dennison, followed by William Goodell, and finally by Joshua Leavitt. Leavitt moved the paper to Boston in 1841 after taking over as the editor.³ By 1835 the abolition movement was established in the East and Ohio's Western Reserve and was beginning to move into the Midwest (the old Northwest Territory consisting of Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Iowa).

The growth of the abolitionist movement was a natural reaction to two things. First was the growing political and economic power of the slave industry and its socioeconomic class—the aristocratic planters or plantation owners; second was the Second Great Awakening. In defiance of American democratic norms the American aristocracy, the Southern planter class, was based on black chattel slavery. At the time of the American Revolution, the main slave crop was tobacco, grown in the Upper South in such states as Kentucky, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina. The Founding Fathers, many of whom came from the planter class, perceived that slavery was in contradiction to the republican ideals enshrined in the Declaration of Independence and they preferred to be hypocrites rather than active defenders of the virtues of slavery. But with the invention of the cotton gin by Eli Whitney in the 1790s, cotton production became a mainstay of the agriculture and the overall economy of the Deep South from South Carolina in the East to Louisiana and eventually East Texas in the West. There were also other cash crops that were easily adapted to the use of slave labor such as hemp in Missouri, rice in Louisiana, and sugar beets.

As slavery grew in importance economically, it also grew in importance politically. Using the three-fifths clause in the constitution that counted slaves as three-fifths of a person for the purpose of assigning representation to states in the House of Representatives, the South was able to artificially keep pace in terms of representation with the more populous North. The situation grew worse over time. According to the 1860 census, New York had a population of 3,831,590 that gave it 31 members of the House and 2 senators for a combined total of 33 votes in Congress and the electoral college. According to the same census, the seven largest slave states had a combined free white population of nearly 3.3 million and a slave population whose three-fifths share was 1.9 million that together gave these states 45 members of the House and 14 senators for a total of 59 votes in Congress and the electoral college.⁴

The planter and professional classes that dominated politics in the South understood the importance of remaining united when it came to the question of slavery. Abolitionists termed the slave industry and its political and judicial representatives the Slave Power or slavocracy (sometimes spelled slaveocracy).

As time passed, the Democratic Party or the Democracy as it styled itself became more and more identified with the South. During the generation of the Founders, the presidency was dominated by Founding Fathers from Virginia. Only John Adams of Massachusetts broke this chain of Southern planters and slaveholders. In the first partisan presidential election of 1800, Jefferson beat John Adams by 73 electoral votes to 65. Of these, ten votes derived from the slave populations of Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, and Kentucky. After this election, neither the Democratic Republicans of Jefferson nor the Democrats of Jackson ever questioned slavery.⁵

Then in the next generation—the antebellum period—from 1824 to 1860, the presidency was dominated by Southern slaveholders and Northern doughboys—“Northerners with Southern sensibilities.” Only the first president of this

generation, John Quincy Adams, and William H. Harrison, who only served a month in office, were exceptions to this rule. Andrew Jackson, the only two-term president in the antebellum era was a prosperous slaveholder from Tennessee. He was followed by Martin Van Buren, a Northern doughboy during his presidency and then after Harrison's sudden death in office, by John Tyler, a slaveholder from Virginia. After Tyler, who was soon a president without a party, came James K. Polk, a protégé of Jackson from Tennessee. Zachary Taylor, a wealthy Louisiana planter and slaveholder of over a hundred slaves was the last elected Whig president. After Taylor's death, there were three Northern doughboys in a row: Whig Millard Fillmore followed by Democrats Franklin Pierce and James Buchanan.

It was not just the presidency that the Slave Power dominated. Because all states, no matter what their population, had equal representation in the Senate with two senators each, the South could at least preserve parity in the Senate if it saw that new Southern states were admitted at the same rate as Northern states. This became a working principle for the South starting with the Missouri Compromise of 1820. In the 1850s, the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 and the Dred Scott decision of March 1857 attempted to make slavery universal in all new territories admitted to the Union. Because the South tended to vote as a unit in the Senate on all issues related to slavery, whereas the North divided on partisan lines between Democrats and Whigs, the Supreme Court was dominated by Southern slaveholders until the Civil War. Thus, the abolitionists could plausibly argue that the Slave Power controlled the three branches of government at the national level as well as both political parties.

Along with this increasing political power came an increase in the slave population as the international slave trade was brought to an end through a statute in 1807 with a ban on the importation of slaves from abroad. Slave states in the Upper South such as Virginia became "stud farms" for the breeding of black slaves that could then be sold throughout the South.⁶ This served to eliminate much of the wastage caused by the high death rate on overcrowded slave ships during their passage from Africa. It became common for slaveholders to sleep with their female slaves and then sell their children. There were 60,000 blacks in the thirteen colonies in 1715, about half a million when the Revolution began, 697,000 at the time of the first census, and about a million when the foreign slave trade was abolished. By 1830, the population had increased to 2 million slaves, and by the time of the Civil War the slave population was approximately 3.17 million.⁷

The more immediate catalyst for the creation of the abolitionist movement was the preaching of the Rev. Charles G. Finney, an evangelical minister who preached throughout western and upstate New York during the 1820s. Western New York became known as the "burned-over district" because the souls of his listeners were said to be consumed by righteousness as he preached throughout the area. Finney and other evangelical preachers like him taught the doctrine of the "perfectibility of man," that is, man could be made perfect through reforms of

human institutions and a lifestyle based on the Bible. Many of Finney's followers became involved in reform movements. Many abolitionists and later antislavery politicians began their political careers involved in other reform movements such as the temperance movement, prison reform movement, or educational reform movement. But as the abolitionist movement spread, more and more of these political reformers became caught up in the new movement and made a decision to devote their political energies to this single issue.

Theodore Weld helped to establish the Lane Theological Seminary, funded by the Tappan brothers, in Cincinnati in the autumn of 1833. In January 1834 Weld organized a debate at the seminary on the subject of abolition. Among the students, there were about twenty from the South, many of them the sons of slaveholders, who spoke about their own personal experiences with slavery. The students concluded that slavery was wrong and should be abolished immediately. They formed their own abolitionist society. In the autumn of 1834, 51 students withdrew from the seminary citing freedom of speech concerns. The students went on to found their own seminary that eventually became Oberlin College, funded by the Tappans. The new school began classes in the spring of 1835 in an old abandoned brick tavern five miles from Lane Seminary. This was owned by Huntington Lyman, the brother-in-law of Salmon P. Chase and one of those responsible for converting Chase to the antislavery cause. One of the initial instructors was a young doctor, Gamaliel Bailey, who along with Chase became a leader in the Ohio Liberty Party. Weld had been on a lecture tour for a year but returned in the autumn of 1835 to train a dozen of the students as professional antislavery lecturers for the AASS. Eventually he trained over seventy lecturers for the movement. William Allan, the son of a Kentucky slaveholder and one of the students who participated in the Lane debate, became a professional antislavery lecturer and organizer. He was responsible for Owen Lovejoy, a prominent political abolitionist and Republican congressman, running for Congress. Lovejoy later claimed that Allan abolitionized his congressional district by preaching and organizing throughout the district until Lovejoy could be elected.⁸

After Weld the most effective lecturer, at least among the non-Garrisonians, was Henry Brewster Stanton. Stanton became the financial secretary of the AASS. He lectured widely on abolition in the United States, Great Britain, and Ireland and wrote widely in the movement's press and journals. Stanton was an advocate of the establishment of an abolitionist party but did not really become involved with the Liberty Party until 1848 when he helped to negotiate the founding of the Free Soil Party. As a successful attorney based in Rochester, New York, he became a leading Republican in New York and was active in the party until after the Civil War.⁹

Another leading convert and a future leader in the abolitionist movement was James G. Birney. Birney was an attorney from an Alabama family, who in 1832 turned his back on slavery. He became an agent for the American Colonization Society, a group founded in 1816 by slaveholders in order to rid Virginia and other slave states of free blacks who were viewed as a threat to slavery.

Birney encountered Weld while the latter was working as a temperance lecturer. The two became friends. During the next year Birney wrote a series of fifteen articles for the press in favor of colonization. During the course of 1834 Birney became convinced that colonization was more a prop to slavery than an alternative to it. He returned to Kentucky and resigned from both the American Colonization Society and the Kentucky Society and prepared to move to Cincinnati. During 1834, scores of prominent Northern supporters of colonization abandoned their support for colonization and became supporters of abolition. Among these was Gerrit Smith, to whom Birney wrote in November 1834 detailing his own conversion. In October 1834 Birney became a permanent agent for the AASS assuring him an income and the ability to engage full-time in abolitionist work. Birney organized the Kentucky Anti-Slavery Society in March 1835—it being little more than the formal circle of Birney’s friends—and the following month he organized the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society. He was threatened with mob violence and the owner of the press that Birney intended to use took possession of it. Birney settled his business affairs and moved to Ohio. After moving to Cincinnati in August 1835, Birney became the editor and publisher of an abolitionist newspaper, the *Philanthropist*. The following year he was joined by Gamaliel Bailey, who eventually bought out Birney and became the sole editor of the paper by 1839.¹⁰

Being an abolitionist lecturer or editor was quite a risky profession in the 1830s just about anyplace outside of New England. Lewis Tappan had his home in New York City attacked by a mob during a riot in July 1834 that lasted for three days.¹¹ Birney was indirectly threatened with violence in Kentucky and then faced mob violence in 1837 in Cincinnati. The printing press for the *Philanthropist* was tossed in the Ohio River by a mob and Birney was probably saved from a lynching by the intervention of attorney Salmon Chase. That same year, Elijah Lovejoy, a Congregationalist minister and abolitionist editor was killed by a lynch mob while attempting to defend his printing press. The following year an abolitionist meeting in Philadelphia was attacked by a mob and the hall where they met was torched. Henry B. Stanton was mobbed some two hundred times during his career as an abolitionist lecturer. Kentucky abolitionist Cassius M. Clay, a cousin of Whig leader Henry Clay, true to the code of a Southern gentleman, fought several duels stemming from his actions as an abolitionist. He did not believe in willingly accepting insults. Many of these mobs were either directly led or instigated by Southern slaveholders who saw the spread of abolitionism as a threat to their property and way of life. Law enforcement officials had very little sympathy during the 1830s and 1840s for the plight of abolitionists attempting to exercise their rights of free speech and free press. In addition to the extralegal means, Democrats in every state but Massachusetts—where they were heavily in the minority—worked through the state legislatures to pass legal restrictions on the activities of abolitionists.¹²

The success of the British Anti-Slavery Society in getting slavery abolished throughout the entire British Empire in 1833–34 inspired the American

abolitionists and seemed to demonstrate that immediate abolition was a feasible and realizable goal. The AASS formed a close bond with the British Anti-Slavery Society and members of the two societies often attended each other's annual conferences and conventions as observers.

THE CHARACTER OF THE ABOLITION MOVEMENT

The abolitionist movement was decidedly a religious movement—and not just a religious movement but an evangelical Protestant religious movement. By the mid-1840s the abolitionists had established their own series of separate abolitionist denominations as groups of abolitionists took control of church congregations in different denominations and split the denomination. These churches known collectively as “come-outer” churches, founded between about 1835 and 1845, became the basis of support for the political wing of the abolitionist movement, the Liberty Party, after it was founded in 1840. But even those abolitionists who were not affiliated with the Liberty Party—the religious anarchist followers of Garrison, known as the Garrisonians, and those members of abolitionist societies who continued to remain Democrats or Whigs—spoke in evangelical terms.

Abolitionists initially saw their task as one of personal witness and conversion. Only when it became evident that this conversion would be a slow and lengthy process did some abolitionists begin thinking in political terms. At first they believed in using mass petitions for a “redress of grievances” as called for under the First Amendment to the constitution. Congress, influenced by the Slave Power, passed a motion known as the “gag rule” to abolitionists and historians to simply table all petitions related to slavery upon their arrival at Congress. The gag rule was passed in 1835 and remained in effect for eight years until 1844 when it was finally overturned largely due to the efforts of two Whig Congressmen, former president John Q. Adams and Joshua Giddings of Ohio. The abolitionists also petitioned state legislatures regarding discrimination against free blacks in the North.¹³

Until the large Irish and German migrations of the mid-1840s, America was overwhelmingly a Protestant country. Ethnically the abolitionists were Yankees—English stock from New England. The Yankees migrated westward moving south to New York and then west to Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Iowa. In Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, the states were divided ethnically and politically between Yankees in the northern part of the state and Southerners, many of them Scotch-Irish, in the southern part along the Ohio River valley. The abolitionists were strongest in three areas: western New England, western New York, and in the Western Reserve of Ohio. From 1840 to 1860 five states would be important in antislavery politics: Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, New York, and Ohio.

Illustrative of the religious character of the abolitionist movement is the career of Elizur Wright, Jr. In 1833 he became an abolitionist after reading copies

of *The Liberator*. Wright was instrumental in organizing the Western Reserve Anti-Slavery Society during the late summer of 1833. The society competed for a time with the Western Reserve Anti-Slavery and Colonization Society, which was promoting colonization rather than abolition as the solution. Hearing of his organizing work in the Western Reserve, AASS President Arthur Tappan offered Wright an executive position in the AASS in New York City.¹⁴

Wright served as “secretary for domestic correspondence” or office manager for the AASS for the first six years after its formation. During the late 1830s, Wright gradually lost his religious faith and became more and more secular and antireligious in outlook. During the 1830s, he worked with all the main non-Garrisonian abolitionists. He served as the headquarters liaison with Theodore Weld and his force of abolitionist lecturers in the field. As time went by, Wright became increasingly unpopular with the conservative evangelicals in the movement. As a result of his unpopularity, Wright lost his position as editor of the *Emancipator* to Joshua Leavitt in August 1837.¹⁵

As a result of his secular outlook, Wright pioneered in developing legal and economic arguments for the abolitionist movement. He pioneered the free labor argument that the Republicans later used. He also was an earlier interpreter of the Constitution as an antislavery document, anticipating the arguments of William Goodell, Alvan Stewart, and Lysander Spooner. Wright was chosen to edit the new paper, the *Massachusetts Abolitionist*, of the Massachusetts Abolitionist Society after it split from the MASS in early 1839. He assumed editorship of the new paper on May 23, 1839, after his work for the spring convention of the AASS was completed. Under his editorship the paper soon surpassed *The Liberator*, which mainly relied on black subscribers, in circulation.¹⁶

Wright, along with Birney and Stanton, was an early advocate of political abolition and the possibility of a third party. As editor, Wright wrote his first editorial in favor of a third party on October 17, 1839, urging the founding of a “human rights party.” Wright was fired from his position as editor in May 1840 as he was deemed to be too controversial and his tenure was mainly spent arguing in favor of a third party. He later recalled his editorship as resulting in “offending the clergy, losing about a thousand subscribers and finally our bread and butter.” Wright was forced out because he had alienated the religious conservatives. After translating a French children’s fairy tale in 1842 and publishing it, he began a new career the following year investigating the use of actuarial tables in England for a Massachusetts life insurance company. For the rest of his life he alternated working in insurance and editing reform newspapers. By the summer of 1847, Wright became almost totally estranged from the Massachusetts Liberty Party. He later took part in politics as a supporter of the Free Soil Party and the Republican Party.¹⁷

In both the abolitionist movement in general and the Liberty Party in particular, five types of people played major roles. First, were the businessmen and philanthropists who served both as sources of funding for the movement and as members of its executive served as administrators of the movement.

Among the leading figures in this group were Arthur Tappan, his brother Lewis, and Gerrit Smith.

Second, were the editors who were the main publicists for the movement and a source of information about local, state, and national politics and about Liberty Party activities. Leading members of this group include: William Lloyd Garrison, of course, Elizur Wright, Joshua Leavitt, and Gamaliel Bailey. Third, were the lawyers who served as the initial advocates of, founders of, and leading constitutional interpreters for the Liberty Party. Leading lawyers include James G. Birney, Alvan Stewart, Myron Clark, Henry B. Stanton, and Salmon P. Chase. The latter will be a central figure throughout this book.

Fourth, were the antislavery lecturers. These lecturers were found among the Garrisonians and of these the foremost figure was Wendell Phillips. Other Garrisonian lecturers were Abby Kelley and Frederick Douglass, an escaped slave who was a Garrisonian during the 1840s until he struck out on his own and became a friend and colleague of Gerrit Smith. Leading non-Garrisonian lecturers were Theodore Weld, a former seminary instructor; the Grimke sisters, Angelina (later the wife of Theodore Weld) and Sarah, from a Southern family; and Henry B. Stanton. Last but not least, were the various Protestant clergy who became leaders in local abolitionist societies and the primary advocates of the Liberty Party to their congregations. They influenced both the platform and the tone and style of the Liberty Party.

THE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

The abolitionist movement was born at approximately the same time as the Second Party System or Jacksonian Party System and became mature with the creation of the Whig Party in 1834. In 1834, the National Republicans, based on an alliance of the New England–New York followers of John Quincy Adams and Daniel Webster and the Western supporters of Henry Clay, merged with anti-Jacksonian Democrats and states-rights supporters led by John Calhoun of South Carolina and John Tyler of Virginia, as well as supporters of the Anti-Masons to form the Whigs.¹⁸ The Whigs were based on two principles. First, their economic policy was based on protectionist high tariffs and on internal improvements financed by the revenue from those tariffs. Internal improvements primarily meant infrastructure related to transportation: bridges, canals, and roads. The second principle was congressional supremacy and resistance to arbitrary executive rule as exemplified in the rule of “King Andrew.” The Democrats conversely believed in free trade, minimal government, and “manifest destiny” or territorial expansion westward and southward in the Caribbean.

The Anti-Masons played a major later influence in antislavery politics in at least four ways. First, most of the members of the Whig antislavery insurgency led by John Quincy Adams in the late 1830s and 1840s were former Anti-Masons or from districts with a high Anti-Mason vote.¹⁹ Second, a number of the

founders of the Liberty Party in 1840 were former Anti-Masons. Third, Salmon P. Chase, who was a leading member of the Ohio Liberty Party and a founder of the Free Soil Party and who was leading Republican, studied law under William Wirt, the Anti-Mason presidential candidate in the 1832 election.²⁰ Fourth, both Thurlow Weed and William H. Seward, who ran the Seward faction of the New York Whig Party and played a major role in the early Republican Party were former Anti-Mason leaders.²¹

There were sectional differences within the two parties. The Southern Whigs were proslavery, whereas the Northern Whigs were antislavery and inclined toward moralistic rhetoric. The Southern Democrats were proslavery, whereas the Northern Democrats tended to be free soil—that is, opposed to the spread of slavery. Except for the short-lived Anti-Mason Party that existed in the Middle Atlantic States and New England from 1826 to 1834, there had not been third parties in American politics.

In the antebellum era, there were few forms of entertainment apart from politics. There were no professional or even collegiate sports teams as there are today. There was neither television, nor movies, nor radio. There was theater, but this was largely confined to the larger cities and frowned upon by many religious denominations. Reading, other than newspapers, was largely restricted to the rich and educated as a leisure pastime. This left politics as the only form of mass entertainment. With state, congressional, and presidential elections, there was some sort of important election at least once a year. Election campaigns lasted for several months and involved speeches by candidates, speakers speaking in place of the candidates, parades, picnics, and barbecues. William Henry Harrison, with his “log cabin and hard cider” campaign theme in 1840, seems to have invented the modern American political campaign. The campaign was largely devoid of serious discussion of issues, ideology, or much of substance. Instead were substituted slogans, parades, campaign songs, and campaign props. Some of this had begun back in the 1820s, but it reached maturity under Harrison in 1840 and high art under the Republicans in 1856 and 1860. As a result of these conditions, electoral participation was very high. In the period covered in the first part of this book, 1840 to 1860, electoral participation in the North was 71 percent for all elections, 81 percent in presidential elections, and 70 percent in nonpresidential elections (congressional, gubernatorial, municipal, etc.).²²

The devoted lifetime loyalty that modern Americans give to professional and collegiate sports teams was then given to political parties. A political allegiance was either passed along from father to son or arrived at early in one’s adult life and then rarely—if ever—changed. Both voters and politicians were expected to form an early attachment to a single party and stick with that party for the rest of their political lives and then pass it on to their children—or at least their sons.

The media was the press, and the press in the antebellum era, as in the previous Republican era, was intensely partisan and often subsidized by the parties. Often editors and/or publishers were party officials serving as party bosses, members of the legislature, or campaign managers for major party figures.

Antebellum papers carried news and opinion intermixed. The analysis was that of the editor (or his/her assistant)—who was often the publisher—and was not presumed by the reader to be either balanced or objective. Along with news articles and opinion were printed speeches delivered in Congress and reprinted from the *Congressional Globe* or from one of the major newspapers. As in our own day, quality political press was largely restricted to the major cities: New York, Boston, Washington, and Chicago, and to a lesser extent Philadelphia, Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo, Charleston, New Orleans, and Richmond.

The main media of communications between the parties and their members and voters were the press and party rallies. At these campaign rallies, candidates would often speak for two to three hours. People would come from tens of miles around to hear an important candidate of—of a major party speak. The parties in antebellum America were organized at the state level with the national organization being quite weak.

The Whig Party was run from Congress—especially the Senate—where its main leaders sat: Henry Clay of Kentucky, Daniel Webster and John Quincy Adams of Massachusetts, John Crittenden of Kentucky, John Bell of Tennessee, and William H. Seward of New York. Clay let Harrison know that he still considered himself to be party leader and would be deciding party policy from the Senate. When his successor John Tyler refused to go along with this, he was literally written out of the party in 1841.

The Whigs had a very small potential pool of presidential candidates: Henry Clay (1840, 1844, 1848) and Daniel Webster (1836, 1852) seemed to be perpetually competing for the nomination along with a smaller pool of former or active generals (William H. Harrison, Zachary Taylor, Winfield Scott). There was also Justice John McLean who was perpetually ready to run from the bench. The Whig Party went into sudden collapse in the 1850s following the death of its leaders: John Q. Adams in 1848, Taylor in 1850, and Clay and Webster in 1852. Scott lost the presidential race—very badly in electoral terms—to Franklin Pierce in 1852 and its Southern wing collapsed in that same year. The Whigs were resurrected in early 1860 in combination with the nativist American Party in the border states as the Constitutional Union Party.

The Democrats were also run from the Senate, but to a much lesser extent. They were also much less dependent on former generals to run as presidential candidates. After Jackson, its only former general at the top of the ticket was Franklin Pierce, who was much more established as a professional politician than as an amateur general. From the inauguration of Andrew Jackson in March 1829 until the inauguration of Abraham Lincoln in March 1861, the Democrats were the majority party at the federal level and basically controlled the federal government by having either control of the White House or of Congress or both. From 1840, when the Liberty Party first appeared, until 1860, when the Democratic Party split along sectional lines, the Democrats received a minimum of 40 percent (1848) and a maximum of 50.2 percent (1852) of the Northern vote in presidential elections, with their average vote share amounting to 45.2 percent of the vote.²³

The remainder went to the Whigs and to the antislavery third parties that are the subject of this book.

The two parties developed a technique for dealing with the sectional differences of their two wings over slavery. The Whigs would simply ignore the issue and not mention it in their platform. The Democrats, on the other hand, dealt with slavery by passing resolutions that were vaguely worded and could be interpreted differently by the two sections as each desired. By doing this, the Democrats managed to last eight years longer than the Whigs without a split along sectional lines.²⁴

But from the beginning of the Second Party System until the collapse of the Whig Party, 1834–54, the two main parties had different reactions in the House whenever slavery questions came up. Whereas the Whigs split sharply along sectional lines on these votes, some 90 percent of Democrats voted proslavery. As a result of this, free state voters who cared about the slavery question began moving to the Whigs starting in 1836 when it first became an issue during discussions of Texas annexation and the gag rule.²⁵ Another major difference was that the Whig Party tolerated a handful of antislavery members in the House. These individuals were tolerated because they helped to bring in abolitionist votes both in their own districts and in other districts. They took a leading role in fighting the 1836–1844 gag rule on antislavery petitions in the House. But they were not permitted to change the party's position of ambiguity on slavery.²⁶ But the Democrats had no tolerance for abolitionists or antislavery members before the Mexican War.

Thomas Morris was elected by the Ohio legislature to the Senate in 1833. On December 21, 1838, the Ohio legislature, dominated by the Democrats, voted to replace Morris with Benjamin Tappan, the younger brother of Arthur and Lewis and himself neither an abolitionist nor a Christian. Morris replied to Clay's infamous February 1839 antiabolitionist speech. "The slave interest has at this moment the whole power of the country in its hands. It has the President . . . the cabinet . . . five out of nine judges of the Supreme Court . . . the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House . . . the army and the navy." After making this speech, Morris was driven out of the Democratic Party. He later had a second political career in the 1840s in the Liberty Party.²⁷

Northern Whig voters were primarily those of Yankee stock, stretching westward from Massachusetts to Lake Michigan along the Great Lakes and came from the entrepreneurial/professional class along with skilled laborers and farmers who raised cash crops for sale. Most belonged to evangelical Protestant churches and many supported various reform movements. But the Whig elite in the cities and Whig businessmen had no problem campaigning for "planter statesmen" such as Zachary Taylor, Clay, and White as "presidential timber."

THE ABOLITIONISTS GRADUALLY GO POLITICAL

As mentioned previously, the first overt political step of the abolitionists was to petition Congress and state legislatures on various issues by organizing massive

petition drives. In these drives, volunteers would go around and collect signatures in their communities and then send the petitions upward to the state abolitionist organization to be forwarded to Washington. When Congress adopted the gag rule in 1835, the abolitionists decided to escalate their political activity by increasing the petition drive. John G. Whittier was transferred to the New York office in May 1836 to organize a massive drive. He was eventually joined by Theodore Weld and Henry Stanton. By the spring of 1839, some two million people had signed antislavery petitions. Volunteers went door-to-door collecting signatures in the North. The coordinated campaign of 1834–40 slackened somewhat as a result of the 1840 schism, but continued in a less centralized fashion.²⁸

The movement next tried “vote scattering”: organizing the endorsement of suitable candidates whom the abolitionists considered to be supportive of their position. This followed an 1837 decision by the AASS that it was important that abolitionists use their vote to support only antislavery candidates. In order to ascertain the positions of the candidates, local branches would undertake to write the various candidates and inquire as to their positions on a number of questions related to the slavery issue. Candidates could also be questioned on the stump after giving speeches and while taking questions from the audience. This tactic had several goals in mind. First, it would hopefully pressure one or both parties to adopt views more favorable to the abolitionist movement. Second, it would raise the visibility of the abolitionists both with the parties and with the public. Third, it would raise the profile of the issue.

The movement attempted interrogation of candidates, as this method was known, during the 1838 campaign before moving toward endorsing independent nominations in 1839. Interrogation was vigorously pursued in both Ohio and Michigan. The problem with this method was that the abolitionists found, as had ordinary voters, that occasionally politicians lied, or evaded, or simply ignored the requests for information. Most politicians saw little to induce them to endanger their standing with a public that was tolerant of slavery, or at least intolerant of abolition. When it came time to vote on an issue of importance to abolitionists, politicians found several other things to be of greater weight in the balance: party loyalty, public opinion, campaign funding, and so on. The abolitionists did achieve some success with this method in New England where candidates were required to win a majority of the votes in order to be declared a winner as opposed to a mere plurality elsewhere. After 1839, the interrogation method was rarely used.²⁹

As a result of the poor results from interrogation, several leading abolitionists in the AASS advocated that the movement endorse its own members who would be willing to run as independent candidates for various offices including president. From this step taken in late 1839, it was only a short step to the formation of a third party the following year. But before this, it is necessary to detail the splits that occurred within the abolitionist movement over the personality of its founder, William L. Garrison.

GARRISON AND HIS CRITICS

In 1837 a major controversy within the AASS began that resulted in a full split in the movement three years later. The background to the controversy was the change of position taken by William Garrison as a result of his conversion to the philosophy of nonresistance—a combination of pacifism and religious anarchism—of John H. Noyes. This philosophy opposed any type of political coercion or any type of association with slaveholders. Because the Constitution permitted slavery, Garrison eventually adopted a policy of disunion and anti-constitutionalism. Garrison ranked abolition higher than the constitution and so, rather than advocating methods that fit within the constitutional political framework, Garrison eschewed political action and advocated pure agitation methods. A group led by James G. Birney wanted to make voting for antislavery candidates a duty for all abolitionists. Garrison, who had himself advocated political action when the AASS was formed, considered this a form of coercion.

That year was a bad one for the abolitionist movement as the Panic of 1837 severely affected a number of the leading philanthropists who played a key role in funding the movement. These included the Tappan brothers, Lewis and Arthur, the latter serving as president of the AASS; and Gerrit Smith. The Tappan brothers lost their business to bankruptcy and ended up with a million-dollar debt.³⁰ Because the movement was forced to go into debt, Lewis Tappan arranged for the sale of the AASS's collection of antislavery tracts. When informed of this, Garrison charged that Tappan had undervalued the library of tracts and therefore deprived the organization of funds. This resulted in bitterness between the Tappans and the Garrisonians.

Garrison was also an advocate of the equality of women and wanted the abolitionist movement to promote this by giving women places on its executive body and voting rights within the organization. This was unacceptable both to social conservatives who objected to gender equality on religious grounds and to political pragmatists who thought that this would alienate public opinion and detract from the movement's main issue of immediate abolition.

Garrison, as a religious anarchist, wanted to promote a separation from the churches. In this he was sustained by many of the abolitionists who eventually joined the Liberty Party and wanted to either convert the churches or form new antislavery churches. Garrison, however, insisted on antagonizing the clergy and attempting to foist his own heterodox religious views upon the movement as a whole.³¹

Elizur Wright became estranged not only from Lewis Tappan and the other religious conservatives, but also from Garrison as well. His view of the controversy was "a pox on both your houses." Garrison deliberately provoked a confrontation with the conservative clerics in New York. After provoking the controversy, Garrison appealed to Lewis Tappan for help in dealing with the Executive Committee of the AASS. Tappan chose to remain neutral in the dispute.³²

By late 1839, the abolitionist movement was split into roughly three groups. First, were the Garrisonians who supported their leader on both gender equality and nonresistance. They were centered in Boston with smaller groups in New York City, the Western Reserve of Ohio, and elsewhere. Second, were the religious and social conservatives centered on the Tappan brothers and based geographically in New England and New York City. Lewis Tappan was initially opposed to the establishment of a third party and did not become a real supporter of the Liberty Party until 1843. Third, was a group of advocates of the establishment of a third party. This was initially a small group of New York lawyers who were friends of Gerrit Smith. The two leading advocates were Alvan Stewart and Myron Clark. These lawyers became the leading advocates of radical constitutional interpretation within the Liberty Party. Some of these were, in fact, supporters of gender equality. One of these was Henry Brewster Stanton, who was the husband of leading feminist Elizabeth Cady Stanton who played a major role at the 1848 Seneca feminist convention. Nonreligious abolitionists, such as Elizur Wright, Jr. tended to support the Liberty Party as a more secular endeavor.

At its annual meeting in New York City in May 1838, the AASS voted 47-37 in favor of a resolution introduced by Atty. Alvan Stewart "that the federal government had the constitutional power to abolish slavery in the slave states." New York leader William Jay, who was also an attorney, regarded the resolution as heresy. Gamaliel Bailey, the editor of the *Philanthropist*, also saw the resolution as heresy. Birney saw the resolution as dangerous for the abolitionist cause. "Unless something be done during the present year to convince the community that his movement is repudiated by the great body of Abolitionists, our cause will be a bad one," he wrote. Instead, Stewart had his constitutional views printed as a pamphlet, *A Constitutional Argument on the Subject of Slavery*.³³

The Liberty Party

THE VOTING CONTROVERSY

The issue that tore the abolitionist movement apart in 1839 was the question of voting. Garrison, who had been politically active when younger and who had voted as recently as 1834 for Congress, felt compelled to refrain from voting after becoming a nonresistor in 1837. Birney and others were pushing to have it recognized that voting was a moral duty for abolitionists. Garrison wanted it left to individual conscience. This was a problem for the movement, which numbered about 70,000 strong in 1840 when the Liberty Party was founded, and which needed to focus all its members on the tactic or tactics that were most efficacious in order to effect change. The nonresistance also tarred abolitionism with a veneer of radicalism even beyond its goals that were not mainstream and affected popular perception of it.

Henry Stanton attended the annual convention of the group in January 1839. By a vote of 180 to 24 the Society accepted Garrison's annual report. Stanton returned to New York and told his supporters that Garrison had succeeded in converting the Massachusetts group to nonresistance.¹

In February 1839, Henry Clay made a very antiabolitionist speech in the Senate in a move to deter the formation of an abolitionist party. In it, Clay predicted that the abolitionists would eventually bring about "a bloody civil war." Clay's speech had the opposite of its intended effect and only served to spur on the third party advocates. Clay was probably acting upon political intelligence from New York that claimed that the formation of such a party was imminent.²

THE FORMATION OF A THIRD PARTY

Myron Holley, like Alvan Steward an attorney from upstate New York who had had experience in the Anti-Masonic Party of 1826–32, then took the lead to promoting a third party. Holley had not become an abolitionist until 1837, and he did not become an advocate of a third party until after Clay's infamous Senate speech in February. Support for a third party was strongest in the burned-over district of upstate New York. Support was also strong among the new Massachusetts Abolition Society. On the eve of the Cleveland convention, Wright wrote to Stanton outlining seven possible benefits of an independent party. The "benefits" were all those of a committed activist rather than a political strategist. They came down to three of substance: 1) it would promote action; 2) it would frighten the South; and 3) it would infuse antislavery spirit into America.³

Holley organized a series of abolitionist conventions in New York in late 1839 and early 1840 before a convention in Albany in April 1840 finally organized the new party. Gerrit Smith wrote the motto for the new party: "Vote for no slaveholder for civil office—nor for anyone who thinks a slaveholder fit for it."⁴ A blizzard at the last moment kept attendance at the Albany convention on April 1, 1840, low. Only 121 delegates from six Eastern states—104 of them from New York—attended. With nearly half the delegates abstaining and by only an eleven-vote margin, they voted to make presidential nominations. The group then went on to nominate Birney for president and Thomas Earle, a prominent Quaker abolitionist from Pennsylvania, as his running mate. The delegates dispersed without giving the new party a name.⁵

The Liberty Party did little more in 1840 than nominate Birney and Earle in Albany and print electoral tickets for voters. That year, the party still had no state or local organization and in most cases no local nominations. Two of its leading advocates, Birney and Stanton, spent the entire campaign attending the London convention of the British & Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, founded in 1839 by Quaker Joseph Sturge, and lobbying from May to November. Overall, the party received some 7,100 votes despite there being ten times that number of male abolitionists within local abolitionist societies.⁶

THE SCHISM IN THE ABOLITIONIST MOVEMENT

The AASS split in May 1840 in New York City when Abby Kelley, the wife of radical abolitionist Stephen Foster, was seated on the business committee by a vote of 557 to 451. Lewis Tappan and his conservative supporters walked out of the convention. That night, thirty of the conservative abolitionists met at the home of Lewis Tappan and he read them a constitution that he had previously drafted for just such an eventuality. The next day the abolitionist clergy adopted it and formed the American & Foreign Anti-Slavery Society (AFASS) and Arthur Tappan was elected as the new president. Theodore Weld quit the movement as

did many other abolitionists who did not want to take sides. Wright quit as editor of *The Emancipator* and was replaced by Joshua Leavitt. Wright dropped out of abolitionist activity for nearly a decade. Before the May 1840 convention the Tappan brothers had sold off most of the assets of the AASS, both in order to extinguish its debt and in preparation for the split. Garrison was left without any publications, organizational press or paper, with just the name of the organization.⁷

Initially the Garrisonians outnumbered the splinterists as only about three hundred members of the AASS joined the new organization. But over time, the political abolitionists became the overwhelming mainstream of the movement as some 90 percent of the movement was made up of members of the AFASS and Liberty Party. The lecturers of the AASS became unwitting recruiters for the Liberty Party as they described the horrors of slavery and signed up new members only to see them join the new party so that they could register their opposition to slavery.

The AFASS was largely controlled, financed, and directed by Lewis Tappan, especially after 1843. This was because his brother Arthur suffered a major business reversal that sent him into bankruptcy that year. Lewis Tappan privately voted for Liberty Party candidates but refused to link himself to the Liberty Party until 1843. By the mid-1840s the AFASS was an empty shell and it was eventually abolished in the 1850s.⁸

RIPENESS?

Stewart, Holley, and others, claimed that a third party was necessary because the existing two parties were morally corrupt and controlled by the Slave Power. Garrison agreed that the two parties were corrupt, but he saw this as simply a reflection of the moral corruption of society as a whole, when it came to slavery. Garrison thought that it would be necessary to first evangelize the public and convert them to the abolitionist gospel before a third party would work. And if this were done, a third party would not be necessary as the two existing parties—or at least one of them—would develop antislavery views in order to win the votes of abolitionists. This is really an argument over what political scientists, political theorists, and professional revolutionaries term *ripeness*. A situation was *ripe* for a particular action, policy, and the like, when the objective conditions were such that such a policy or action had a good chance of succeeding.⁹

Holley and Sewart saw a third party as a temporary means to serve as a pressure group until one of the existing parties saw the value in adopting antislavery views and absorbing the party as a faction. The party was also viewed as a means for abolitionists to participate in politics without having to violate their basic principles by voting for slaveholders or their allies. In time, this was the only real founding goal that the Liberty Party fulfilled and it overshadowed lesser goals.

Most of the Liberty men, as Liberty Party members called themselves, were moralists and absolutists at heart. They did not believe in compromise, bargaining, or politics as the art of the possible. Most of the active members such as Birney were not really democrats at heart but rather monarchists who wanted a benevolent moral king to force the people to be moral.

A few prominent Liberty leaders, primarily those from Cincinnati, Ohio, were sufficiently political in the conventional sense to promote policies that could readily be sold to the electorate and to bargain with others to make an organization that could eventually win office. These became known as the Cincinnati clique to historians and consisted of Salmon P. Chase, Gamaliel Bailey, and Thomas Morris. Soon after joining the Ohio Liberty Party in the fall of 1841, Chase determined that Birney was not a suitable presidential candidate and tried to bring in a candidate from outside the party to replace him.¹⁰

Another key controversy was whether or not the new party should be a one-issue abolitionist party or a multi-issue reform or liberal party. The pragmatists led by Birney, Stanton, and Bailey wanted the party to be a single-issue party for two reasons. First, by being a single-issue party it would signify the moral importance of this issue and not lose its focus. Second, they noted that abolitionists were divided on economic issues and most other issues apart from abolition. If the party adopted a multifocus approach it risked its members defecting back to the two main parties. This became a major issue in the late 1840s as Gerrit Smith's circle in New York led the push for a multi-issue party.

THE WHIG ANTISLAVERY INSURGENCY

Parallel with the rise of political abolitionism as a third party movement, there was developing a small antislavery movement within the Whig caucus in the House. Former president John Quincy Adams, who had been elected to the House from Plymouth, Massachusetts in November 1830, led it. By the time Adams made his first appearance in Congress in December 1831, he was an Anti-Mason and he joined the new Whig Party sometime in the mid-1830s. He was too conservative to be an abolitionist, but too much of a humanist to be their enemy.¹¹

In May 1836 when the Democratic majority in the House imposed the gag rule, automatically tabling all antislavery petitions, Adams made it his personal business to challenge the rule every year when it came up for renewal. He went out of his way to provoke the South—especially Southern nationalists—during congressional debates as a form of sport. In May 1836, during the gag rule debate, he argued that Congress had the right to intervene and interfere with slavery in the slave states during wartime, whether the war was against Indians, slaves, or a civil war. In fact he seemed to see a future intersectional civil war as inevitable. “From the instant that our slaveholding states become the theater of war, civil, servile, or

foreign . . . the war powers of Congress extend to interference with the institution of slavery in every way by which it can be interfered with!"¹²

Almost all Northern Whigs voted against the gag rule but the rule passed and was renewed each year on the strength of an alliance between the Democrats and Southern Whigs. Whereas Whigs voted along sectional lines, Democrats tended to vote along partisan lines throughout the antebellum period. Those who were unwilling to do so left the party to become Free Soilers or Republicans. Adams became a folk hero and was dubbed by a fellow representative as "Old Man Eloquent." He reveled in his popular status in New England almost as much as in annoying the South.¹³

THE LIBERTY PARTY ORGANIZES

1841 was the year of organization and the real year of founding for the Liberty Party as a political organization rather than as a mere idea. The party, like the two main parties, was organized at the state level, with only a loose national organization. The party had a National Committee, but unlike that of the AASS, it did not regularly meet and did most of its business by mail. The party had an annual convention usually held in upstate New York—Albany, Buffalo, and Syracuse. This illustrates the heavy New York-orientation of the party. The party's National Committee met only at the party's nominating conventions, of which it held only three during its existence (1841, 1843, 1847). The party had no national campaign fund or financing, or even a flagship newspaper until the founding of the *National Era* in January 1847. The Eastern Party in New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New England, tended to be much more dominated by clergy and dependent on the come-outer (abolitionist) churches than the Western Party. But Reinhard Johnson concedes that both the Michigan and Wisconsin parties followed the Eastern pattern and historian Vernon Volpe contends that this dichotomy between the Easterners and Westerners was something invented by later historians that was not accurate. Volpe contends that when abolitionist historians write of the Westerners they mean the Ohio Liberty Party and specifically the Cincinnati clique.¹⁴

The Liberty Party was effectively split into regions as well as states. I now review the growth of the party in its three main regions (New England, New York, and the Midwest) by looking at the leading state party in each. I will then return to the national party for the 1844 presidential campaign and subsequent developments.

THE LIBERTY PARTY IN MASSACHUSETTS 1841–48

The Liberty Party had more gains in New England than elsewhere due to two main reasons. First, New England state constitutions required an election winner

to have an absolute majority of the vote rather than a mere plurality. This allowed the Liberty Party to play a role of balancing between the two main parties. By getting enough votes, a Liberty candidate could keep a particular office vacant. Second, large portions of the region were more antislavery than any place else in the country. This area included: western Massachusetts, eastern New Hampshire, Vermont, and southeastern Maine. The Massachusetts Liberty Party matured between 1841 and 1847 with its leaders devising a strategy based on a combination of the old agitation techniques of the 1830s and a party organization modeled after the two main parties. Usually the party was in hibernation from November to September every year and only emerged to fight a two-month campaign. The party was not really organized at the state level until 1846. That year the party organized an effective statewide party.

From December 1841 until August 1848 the official paper of the Massachusetts Liberty Party was the *Emancipator*, which Joshua Leavitt had moved to Boston from New York in 1841. Leavitt was the sole editor until August 1847 when he became a contributing editor. Two other Boston Liberty papers existed during the party's existence: the Boston *Morning Chronicle* in the early 1840s and the Boston *Daily Chronotype* in the late 1840s with Elizur Wright, Jr. as editor. Smaller papers also existed periodically throughout the state. Often these would only exist during the campaign season and the *Emancipator* ended up absorbing several of them. This was out of a total Liberty press of 25 newspapers in 1844. The Liberty press served both as an advertiser of party functions and a means of communication between party leaders and voters as well as a forum for debate on the nature of the party and party policy.¹⁵

The Massachusetts Liberty Party was really a two-idea party as it supported temperance as well. This was a reform that was supported by many Whigs, including many Conscience Whigs, and later by many Know-Nothings in the 1850s. By 1845 the Garrisonians were a small minority not just in the country as a whole but within Massachusetts as well.¹⁶

Collaboration with other parties was often carried out at local level elections where the party was more successful than in state and national races. By 1842 the Liberty Party held the balance-of-power in the state legislature. The party was strongest after the 1844 elections when it ceased to be merely a party of former Whigs and became a home of abolitionists from both parties. By late 1847 the Massachusetts Liberty Party was "stagnating and strife-ridden" and John Hale as a presidential candidate was seen as a cure for what ailed the party.¹⁷

The Massachusetts Liberty Party, like the party nationally, had a very religious tone and ministers played a major role in the party. The religious tone with its extensive use of Biblical quotations declined somewhat after 1844 as the party moved toward more secular politics. The religious denomination most supportive of the Liberty Party in Massachusetts were the Methodists, followed by Baptists, then Congregationalists, and followed slightly behind, by the Orthodox Congregationalists. The lowest percentage was among Unitarians with only an eighth of the ministers affiliated.¹⁸

THE NEW YORK LIBERTY PARTY 1841–48

Gerrit Smith of Petersboro, New York, and a circle of his close friends who lived in surrounding communities dominated the New York Liberty Party. Smith was one of the country's wealthiest men from the 1830s to the 1850s. The "Smith circle" consisted of Smith and six close friends. This circle constituted a third group of abolitionists distinct from both the Garrisonians and the Tappanites. All but one were founder members of the New York ASS in 1833. All were well-educated professional men, mostly lawyers and editors. All except Holley (born in 1779) were born in the 1790s. All had either been active in the Anti-Masonic Party, or the temperance movement, or both, before becoming abolitionists. And all were either originally from New England or had parents from there.¹⁹

Smith was the source of funding for the group's activities and the peace-maker within the circle; he led not only by providing the funds, but also by responding to the emotional needs of the members of the circle. Stewart was the legal theorist and brain of the circle. The members of the group did not consciously see themselves as such until late 1841, by which time Holley had died. Stewart converted Holley—both had become convinced of the inadequacy of candidate interrogation—to the third-party idea, and then they converted Smith and the rest of the circle in early 1840. The circle believed that an abolitionist party could be temporary, as it would quickly win over one of the two main parties out of self-interest.²⁰

The Liberty vote in New York never exceeded 4.5 percent—which was ahead of the three percent national average in 1844—and most of that was concentrated in the fifth senatorial district where the Smith circle members lived. Smith's Madison Co. hometown of Smithfield led the Liberty vote nationally with 36.8 percent of the vote between 1840 and 1847. In most towns, with a Liberty vote of over a hundred, there was a come-outer church affiliated with the party. The come-outer movement was strongest in New York's burned-over district.²¹ New York was the only state with a large enough Liberty vote to affect national politics.²² In the 1844 presidential election, the New York Liberty vote for Birney was over 15,000—more than the difference between the state totals for Clay and Polk—in effect giving the state and the national election to Polk. It was also nearly a quarter of the total Liberty vote in the 1844 presidential election.

Smith and Beriah Green rarely left Petersboro and Whitesboro respectively. By 1846, the Smith circle had been reduced from seven to four: Holley was dead, Stewart had left, and Green rarely came to Smith's aid.²³

By the mid-1840s the Smith men came to believe that the Liberty Party could no longer be temporary, but must become a permanent political fixture due to its failure to convert either of the two main parties to Bible politics. The Smith circle became the primary opposition to the Cincinnati clique within the national Liberty Party as they held out for purity and abolition. By 1847 the entire circle, except for Stewart—who left the circle over this issue—came to believe in the necessity of abandoning single-ideaism and becoming a general reform party.

In June 1847 they founded the Liberty League at a convention at Macedon Lock, New York, as a faction within the Liberty Party that would serve as a counterweight to the Cincinnati clique's coalition politics. Within the party, the Liberty League had no support outside of New York.²⁴

In August 1848, when the Liberty Party merged with the Conscience Whigs and Barnburners to form the Free Soil Party, Gerrit Smith appropriated the Liberty Party name for his Liberty League faction and the party continued to exist until 1860. After 1855 it was known as the Radical Abolition Party. But by 1851 the circle was reduced to the Smith-William Goodell duo that served as alternate presidential candidates for the Liberty Party starting in 1848.²⁵ By 1844 there were a large number of come-outer congregations in New York and they banded together to support the Liberty Party. Calvin Colton, a Whig editor who decried the intervention of abolitionists in politics, dubbed the Liberty Party "the abolition church." By 1845 there were 275 come-outer congregations of various denominations in New York.²⁶

The most influential come-outer sects within the Liberty Party were the Wesleyan Methodists, the American Baptists, the Free Presbyterians, and the Franckean Lutherans. And many of these members continued to vote for Whig candidates throughout the lifetime of the Liberty Party. Many of the members of the come-outer churches were also reluctant to engage in politics as they saw it as a corrupt and corrupting activity.²⁷

The Liberty Party in New York and New England had a symbiotic relationship with the come-outer sects. The Smith circle was active in the hierarchy of these churches.²⁸ Gerrit Smith, Goodell, and Beriah Green were the most prominent leaders in both the Union church movement and the New York Liberty Party after 1842. A Garrisonian minority existed in all of the come-outer churches, but the sect officers and editors of church publications were usually Liberty men.²⁹

Liberty men in upper New York were sure that a "political millennium" was at hand. Some of these same men were convinced that their favorite candidates were sinless. As a result, Liberty Party meetings in New York often resembled revivalist meetings. In the towns of central New York the local come-outer churches served as the political base for Liberty Party campaigning—as local party headquarters. According to a religious historian, "Ecclesiastical abolitionist communities were political abolitionist communities."³⁰

Gerrit Smith began noticing various "classes"—he meant factions—within the party as early as 1843. Two years later these factions had increased to "a considerable difference of opinion among Liberty men" and by 1847 increased to where Goodell noted a proclivity "to divide ourselves against ourselves." Few New York Liberty men supported the coalitionist project of the Cincinnati clique (see below) that eventually led to the creation of the Free Soil Party in August 1848.³¹

Much of the split with the fusionists was because they did not insist on come-outerism and were willing to work with existing churches. When the Smith circle organized the Liberty League as an active faction within the Liberty Party and it

held its first convention at Macedon Lock, New York, in June 1847 most of the delegates attending were from New York. Between 1845 and 1861 the movement for antislavery come-outerism in New York slowly collapsed.³²

THE OHIO LIBERTY PARTY 1841–48

In November 1840 Birney received only 903 votes in Ohio out of nearly 275,000 cast which made it 0.3 percent. Birney received more votes (97) in Ashtabula County than anywhere else in Ohio. The Liberty Party served the valuable function of making Whig renegade Joshua Giddings, who was the representative in Congress from the district, look moderate by comparison.³³

The Ohio Liberty Party was established by a convention in Columbus on January 21–22, 1841, with 209 delegates attending. This Party was divided into two main groups: the Cincinnati clique, a small group of pragmatists who lived in Cincinnati and surrounding Hamilton Co. and provided the leadership of the party, and the Western Reserve, an area of about 3,000 square miles in the eleven northeastern counties in the state, where the bulk of the state's Liberty men resided. Abolitionist historian Vernon Volpe contends that the bulk of Ohio Liberty men were similar to those in the East. There the Liberty men engaged in fierce competition with abolitionists associated with the Whigs such as former law partners Joshua Giddings and Ben Wade. Ben Wade was the older brother of Edward Wade who was one of the leaders of the Liberty Party in the Western Reserve. The two brothers were not on speaking terms for several years over partisan politics. The Ohio Liberty Party differed from other state Liberty parties in two important regards. First, it was willing to support candidates for public office who were not abolitionists. Second, it disavowed any intent of using direct political action to end slavery in the South.³⁴

Cincinnati was just across the Ohio River from Kentucky and slave territory and was itself settled by residents who did not oppose slavery on moral grounds. The Western Reserve was settled by Yankees from New York and New England. The Cincinnati clique mainly consisted of Gamaliel Bailey, the editor of *Philanthropist*; Samuel P. Chase, a lawyer and novice politician who wrote most of the resolutions for the state Liberty Party; Thomas Morris, the former Democratic senator; and Samuel Lewis, the Liberty gubernatorial candidate. The clique controlled the state party by controlling its two main institutions: the convention and the *Philanthropist*.³⁵

Both Bailey and Chase were former Whigs who supported William H. Harrison in 1840. Chase lost his seat on the Cincinnati City Council when the Democrats swept the election in 1841. He left the party in time to play an organizing role for the first state Liberty convention in Columbus in December 1841. The only other prominent members at the convention were Morris and Bailey.³⁶

Chase joined the abolitionist movement in dramatic fashion in the summer of 1836 by protecting Birney from a lynch mob. Chase then represented Birney in

lawsuits against prominent members of the mob. In 1837 he had his first fugitive slave case involving a maid of Birney who was a fugitive from Kentucky. In April 1842, in a fugitive slave case argued before Judge McLean, Chase argued the position that slavery was a purely state institution but that “freedom was national.” Chase had his legal arguments printed as a pamphlet and sent to every member of Congress. In this case he was cocounsel with William H. Seward who handled the technical arguments. He defended so many fugitive slaves that in 1845 his opponents dubbed him the “Attorney General for Runaway Negroes.” Chase adopted the title with pride. In May 1845 the black community of Cincinnati presented him with an engraved silver pitcher for his legal efforts.³⁷

In December 1841, Chase urged the Ohio Liberty convention to consider John Q. Adams or Seward as possible presidential candidates in place of Birney. Chase was unsuccessful at both ends: Birney was only willing to step down in favor of another movement abolitionist and neither Seward nor Adams was interested. But these attempts did give him political connections with politicians outside of the abolitionist movement. For a time, he opened up a regular correspondence with both Seward and Giddings.³⁸

Bailey was not interested in taking sides during the schism of 1840 and the arguments that preceded it. Bailey was really responsible for organizing the Ohio Liberty Party and he gave it its character. He organized the Hamilton Co. Liberty organization that nominated Sam Lewis for the Ohio senate in July 1842. He concentrated on publishing the *Philanthropist*, circulating documents, and publicizing the spread of Liberty activity. Meanwhile Chase, Lewis, Leicester King, and Morris crisscrossed the state making speeches, promoting organization, and seeking new *Philanthropist* subscribers and encouraging the establishment of local newspapers. The clique started to fall apart in 1843 following the national Liberty convention in Buffalo when Morris attempted to wrest control of the party away from Chase and Bailey. Morris died in November 1844. Chase and Bailey stayed close, but Lewis later split with Chase in 1851.³⁹

Over time, the Liberty vote slowly but steadily rose in Ohio: from 903 votes in 1840, to 2,848 the following year, to 5,500 for Liberty gubernatorial candidate Sam Lewis in 1842, and 6,552 votes in 1843.⁴⁰ In 1842 Bailey reversed his previous policy of supporting antislavery candidates from all parties and began to insist that Liberty men no longer support antislavery Whig candidates. In 1843 the Liberty leaders firmly rejected Giddings calls for a coalition. Bailey realized that a coalition would cause antislavery Whigs to remain in their own party. He argued that if Whigs wanted Union they should join the Liberty Party.⁴¹

Bailey believed that the Liberty Party could serve as a pressure group on Ohio Whigs to force them to take even stronger antislavery stands. The Whig Party was both reformist—committed to social and moral reform—and elitist. Bailey rejected Whig economic policy as representing the interests of big business. But he also rejected the Democratic Party as the party of slavery. Chase had a similar attitude and had called for the renaming of the party as the True Democracy in June 1845 at the Cincinnati Western and Southern Liberty Convention.⁴²

Abolitionist sentiment in the Northwest/Midwest, as in New England and New York was strongest among evangelical Protestants. Liberty voters were located in small village communities, mostly in “Liberty towns” based on come-outer churches. The villagers denounced the North’s corruption as much as the South’s, and in general showed little interest in economic issues when deciding on whom to vote for. The Liberty vote was strongest in the Western Reserve. The Liberty Party’s appeal, both in Ohio and in the North as a whole, was “limited both by popular racial prejudice and by its own sectarianism.”⁴³

The characterization of the Ohio and Northwestern Liberty Parties of historian Vernon Volpe is at odds with that painted by most historians such as Joseph Rayback, Richard Sewell, and others. The discrepancy can be explained if one considers that Volpe was looking at the parties as a whole, whereas Rayback, Sewell, and other historians concentrated on the leadership element—the Cincinnati clique in the case of Ohio—and not the rank and file voters. Volpe contends that Chase and Bailey encountered nearly as much opposition to their ideas in the Midwest as they did in the East.⁴⁴

In Ohio there was a fierce competition between the Whig and Liberty parties for votes after 1841. But the Whigs had a safe majority in all but one county, Trumbull Co., in the state. The Liberty Party was not so much a direct threat to Whig candidates in Ohio as an indirect threat: by siphoning off votes it sometimes allowed Democrats to beat the Whigs. For this reason the Democrats welcomed the Liberty Party. Several Whig legislative candidates lost in 1842 to Democrats because of Liberty votes. But more Whigs won in 1844 and 1846 as many antislavery voters returned to help the party. In 1844 Ohio Whigs managed to elect a Whig governor by only 1,300 votes out of over 300,000 votes cast including 8,400 Liberty votes.⁴⁵

The infamous Garland forgery against James Birney, carried out late in the 1844 presidential campaign, was the work of Whigs in Detroit. The forgery hurt Birney in Ohio (and Michigan) by keeping many wavering Whig voters, who did not like Clay, from supporting the Liberty candidate, due to the alleged conspiracy with the Democrats. The Garland forgery served to reinforce the conviction among Liberty men that the two main parties were morally depraved. But strategically it was a wash as Liberty votes in New York helped Polk to carry that state canceling out Clay’s victory in Ohio. The forgery insured that there would be no cooperation between the Whig and Liberty parties in Ohio and elsewhere.⁴⁶

In Rep. Joshua’s Giddings’s congressional district in the Western Reserve the Liberty vote increased approximately ten-fold between 1840 and 1844. In 1844 Edward Wade, one of the party leaders in the Reserve, was the Liberty candidate against Giddings. Edward’s older brother Ben Wade simultaneously maneuvered to weaken Giddings’s Whig support in the district. Ben Wade did this not on behalf of his brother and the Liberty Party, for which he had no use, but in order to eliminate a rival in his own party. Giddings accused Liberty men of plotting to elect Polk by undermining Henry Clay. Giddings ended up defeating both

Edward Wade and his Democratic opponent by more than a 2:1 ratio over the combined opposition total.⁴⁷

In a private letter in July 1845, Giddings wrote, “Indeed I regard it as perfectly clear that the Liberty party and that portion of the Whig party which is strongly antislavery will ultimately unite.”⁴⁸ Whig tactics in Ohio in the late 1840s called for Whig candidates to pledge themselves to antislavery work while blaming the annexation of Texas and the Mexican War on Liberty voters who helped Polk to win the presidency in 1844. The fourteen Whig votes in Congress against the Mexican War included five from Ohio and nine from the Northeast. The five from Ohio were all from districts where third party activity was high. Antiwar sentiment was quite strong among the come-outer churches that provided the base for the Liberty Party. But Liberty men mostly expressed their antiwar sentiment through church activities rather than on the stump, so as not to hurt the party.⁴⁹

The Ohio Liberty Party was hurt when its press, which was uninsured, was destroyed in a fire in 1845. Most of the Midwestern Liberty parties had only a single paper per state, as was the case with most Liberty parties nationally. The only major exceptions were in Ohio—which also had the *Philanthropist*—and Massachusetts.⁵⁰

Chase derived what little power and influence he had in the Ohio Liberty Party, which was much less than what he later enjoyed in both the Free Soil and Republican parties, from his ability to write resolutions for conventions and election platforms and get them passed. His constitutional interpretation that “slavery is local, freedom is national” was adopted by the Ohio Party and then by the Free Soil and Republican parties.

The religious Liberty men in Ohio and the Midwest, like those in New York and New England, were only secondarily interested in winning elections and with party victory. Their main concern was to demonstrate their religious purity. Chase was more concerned with winning. He had a burning political ambition, but he was not willing to abandon the antislavery cause; he had already burned his bridges with the Whigs and he could not support the Democrats as long as they remained pro-slavery. His two closest political allies, Bailey and Samuel Lewis, the Liberty candidate for governor of Ohio in 1846, had similar backgrounds to Chase that made them talented cultural outsiders within the party. Thus he became very committed to finding a political vehicle that would allow him to actually win office without sacrificing his antislavery principles. How he actually brought this about is the subject of a later chapter.

THE 1844 CAMPAIGN

By 1843 the Liberty Party was thoroughly organized at district, county, and state level in every state in the North. Its attempts to organize in the border states and Virginia had failed. Its total vote across the North in 1843 totaled over 60,000.

By 1844 the Liberty Party boasted 25 regular publications across the North: three daily papers, twenty weeklies, and two semi-monthly papers with a weekly circulation of over 35,000.

At its first national convention in 1841 in Buffalo, the new party renominated James G. Birney as its presidential nominee for 1844, something that was opposed by the Ohio Party, along with former Democratic senator Thomas Morris as his running mate. Chase persuaded Morris to resign from the ticket in January 1843 in the hope that this would put moral pressure on Birney to also resign so that the nomination would be open and could be undertaken much closer to the election. But this ploy failed—Birney refused to resign—and Morris was forced to rejoin the ticket. Morris split with Chase and Bailey shortly after the issue was resolved.⁵¹

The expected nominees from the two main parties in 1844 were Martin Van Buren for the Democrats and Henry Clay for the Whigs. President Tyler never succeeded in creating his own party, but he did manage to make the annexation of Texas a national issue. The Whigs, still expecting Van Buren to be his opponent, nominated Clay as expected at their convention in April 1844. A week later the major partisan newspapers carried letters from both Van Buren and Clay opposing the annexation treaty that Tyler had negotiated with Texas. But a month later the Democrats unexpectedly nominated dark horse candidate James K. Polk, a Tennessee protégé of Jackson, and George Dallas of Pennsylvania. Van Buren had come out against the annexation after Senator Benjamin Tappan had leaked the text of the proposed annexation treaty to the New York *Evening Post* through his brother Lewis. Because of the sensation caused by the leak, Van Buren perceived that it would be safe to come out against annexation. Benjamin Tappan manipulated the event to his own financial advantage through the purchase and sale of Texas stock for a \$50,000 profit.⁵²

For the Liberty men this was an ideal condition—they would be running against two slaveholders so that morally abolitionists belonging to both parties would be tempted to vote for the third party. The three parties produced four different positions on Texas annexation among them: the Democrats were for it and promised to do everything to bring Texas into the Union, the Liberty men were opposed, and Clay was both for it and against it depending on the needs of the campaign. Initially Clay stuck by the position he had assumed in his April 27 letter on Texas. But running poorly in the South, he was under pressure from Southern Whigs to modify his position. Tyler withdrew from the race on August 20 and endorsed Polk for the White House. Throughout the summer of 1844 Democrats attempted to link Clay to the abolitionists, which was absurd if one considered his record, but complicated by the fact that his cousin, Cassius M. Clay, a prominent antislavery man from Kentucky was campaigning for him. As a result of the two “Alabama” letters published on Texas annexation by the Clay campaign in September 1844, Seth Gates, an antislavery Whig representative from New York, abruptly quit the Whigs and joined the Liberty Party. He wrote to Giddings and advised him to abandon Clay.⁵³

For the Liberty men the contest was largely a bilateral one between them and the Whigs, with Whig leaders attempting to finesse Clay's statements on Texas so as to make him appear antislavery in the key states of Ohio, Michigan, and New York. Birney campaigned vigorously throughout the North and by doing so he set the pattern for John Hale in 1852. Birney spent most of his Old Testament fury on Clay. In turn the Whigs attacked Birney as a deadbeat who had defrauded his creditors and as being pro-Catholic. The press of both major parties claimed that the third party took most of its votes away from their party. All major party figures participated in the campaign. Chase campaigned vigorously in Ohio, but was not surprised by the outcome. Lewis Tappan campaigned in several New England towns that had been strongly Federalist on behalf of the Liberal Party. He also formed a local Liberty chapter in Brooklyn and, partly due to his efforts, the party did better that year in New York than in most other states. The efforts of Liberty leaders like Stanton, Leavitt and the local organizations secured 10,000 votes for Birney in Massachusetts, the next highest total after New York.⁵⁴

But the most noticeable feature of the campaign from the viewpoint of the abolitionists and Liberty men was the "Garland forgery." Detroit Whigs released a forged letter that put Birney into a conspiracy with the Democrats. The forgery was first released on October 29, 1844, and was revealed successively in different areas after Birney had already passed through them so that he could not refute the forgery. Liberty men claimed that the forgery cost the party thousands or even tens of thousands of votes. This is extremely unlikely as few regular Liberty voters would have been fooled. The main effect of the incident was to poison relations between the Whigs and the Liberty men for the rest of the life of the third party.⁵⁵

The Liberty Party polled a total of 61,993 votes nationally, with 25,657 from New England, 19,097 from the Middle Atlantic States and 17,239 from the Midwest. The largest Liberty state totals were as follows: New York 15,814; Massachusetts 10,814; Ohio 8,082; Maine 4,839; New Hampshire 4,161; Vermont 3,894; and Michigan 3,638. Only in Michigan and New York was the Liberty total greater than the victory margin for the winning party—in New York it was more than three times as great—5,106. But in New York the Democrats had 24,852 new voters as against only 6,469 for the Whigs as compared to 1840. In Michigan the margin of victory was 3,546 votes for the Democrats with 6,635 new votes for the Democrats compared to only 1,252 for the Whigs. Instead of complaining about the Liberty vote having cost them the election, the Whigs should have admitted that it was the uneven growth rate between the two main parties to the advantage of the Democrats that cost them the election. The New York electoral vote alone was enough to provide the margin of victory for Polk over Clay.⁵⁶

Texas annexation did have its positive side for the antislavery cause. The gag rule automatically tabling antislavery petitions, was struck down after eight years and seven months by a vote of 108 to 80 in the House on December 3, 1844. It had only been renewed in February 1844 by a single vote. Northern Democrats, looking to avenge the defeat of their leader Martin Van Buren by Polk at the

Democratic convention, voted with the Whigs to lift the ban. This was the first defeat for the Slave Power.⁵⁷

NEW DIRECTIONS AND VENTURES

In December 1844 Birney announced at the national Liberty Party convention that he did not want to be the party's presidential nominee in 1848. The Garland forgery had already hurt his standing with the party's leadership. Birney suffered a stroke in September 1845 that left him unable to make long speeches. He was not succeeded in stature by a single individual but, rather, a number of individual leaders competed to inherit his mantle. The most important were: Chase and Bailey in Ohio, Smith and Goodell in New York, and Joshua Leavitt in Massachusetts. Smith became the leader of one of three main factions in the Liberty Party and had Birney join him. The Smith faction wanted to transform the Liberty Party from a single-issue party to a general reform party. The other two factions were led by Chase, who favored forming a broad antislavery coalition by attracting antislavery politicians from both parties, and by Leavitt and Lewis Tappan, who wanted to keep the Liberty Party as it had been up until then. Chase did not really want to be the party's presidential nominee as he saw this as a booby prize of sorts.⁵⁸

A model for Chase in establishing an antislavery coalition was developed in New Hampshire when John P. Hale, a loyal Democrat, quarreled with New Hampshire Democratic leader Franklin Pierce and was expelled from the party in early 1845 for writing an open letter to his constituents opposing the annexation of Texas. The Independent Democrats, as the Hale supporters called themselves, decided to campaign in the legislature for Hale to be elected to the Senate in 1846. They were backed by both the state and national Liberty Party and by Whigs. A three-party coalition was set up with the Whigs agreeing to back Hale for the Senate in exchange for Liberty and Independent Democrat support for Whig Anthony Colby to be elected governor. The coalition was more successful than anyone could have imagined: not only was Hale elected to a full Senate term but a Liberty man, Joseph Cilley, was sent to the Senate to fill out a short term of one year. Following this, the Independent Democrats and New Hampshire Liberty Party held a convention and merged their two parties, to become the New Hampshire Alliance, and pledged to make Hale their presidential candidate in 1848. The following spring the party newspapers of the two former parties merged. Liberty men began referring to it as "the Hale storm down east." Liberty men and Whigs in New York soon imitated the New Hampshire Alliance.⁵⁹

Until the split in the New Hampshire Democratic Party, the Liberty men in that state were just drifting along from one election to the next. They were not strong enough to pursue balance-of-power bargaining with the other parties in the legislature. Like other Eastern Liberty parties, the New Hampshire Liberty Party was initially dominated by the clergy.⁶⁰

In 1846 Lewis Tappan decided that the party, if it was to be competitive with the two main parties, needed its own national paper in Washington. The party could not afford to establish a daily but could found a weekly paper. The paper was to combine quality political reporting with an antislavery agenda. Tappan wanted the paper to be privately owned rather than owned and financed by the party, but he was willing to bankroll its establishment. Leavitt had alienated Tappan in the early 1840s with his support for the Liberty Party in the pages of his paper. By 1846 it was generally recognized among the Liberty editors that Bailey had surpassed Leavitt to become the foremost Liberty editor. So Tappan turned to Bailey. Both Leavitt and Bailey were experiencing financial difficulties as editors. The Northwest Liberty Convention meeting in Chicago in June 1846, as the third of a series of three regional conventions in 1845–46, set up a committee to look at the question of establishing a national newspaper in Washington. The committee was even more favorably disposed toward Bailey as editor than Tappan was.⁶¹

Tappan made an offer to Bailey in August 1846 and Bailey accepted. Tappan bought out the subscriber list from the *Philanthropist* on behalf of the Liberty Party so that Bailey could settle his debts in Cincinnati and move to Washington. Bailey was then able to use the subscriber list to offer subscriptions to the new paper, the *National Era*, to his former subscribers in Cincinnati.⁶²

The paper published its first issue in January 1847. It started with 8,000 subscribers and by September had almost increased its subscriptions by half to 11,000. Bailey established cordial relations with both the Washington press corps and the social elite in Washington. The *National Era* was by far the best written antislavery paper: Bailey soon made the paper “into a sharp well-edited, thoroughly readable newspaper, one of the best of the period and certainly the best of the antislavery publications” according to a biographer of rival abolitionist editor William Lloyd Garrison.⁶³

Within a year of its founding, the paper had surpassed both the Washington *Union* and the Washington *National Intelligencer* in circulation. It traded copies with over sixty Southern newspapers, so that Bailey was able to get editorials and news to quote for his paper and in turn have his paper quoted all over the South. By January 1848 Bailey had bought out Tappan’s interest in the paper and established it as his own individual enterprise. He published high quality prose and poetry in addition to purely factual and editorial content. Harriet Beecher Stowe had her novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* serialized in the *National Era* from June 1851 to April 1852.⁶⁴

As mentioned in passing, the Liberty Party held three regional conventions between 1845–46. These were held in: Cincinnati (June 1845—Southern and Western Liberty Convention); Chicago (June 1846—Western Liberty Convention); and in Cleveland (Northwestern Antislavery Convention). Chase was heavily involved in organizing all three conferences. The former was by far the most important. It involved some 2,000–3,000 delegates from all parties—although only a few were not Liberty men, most were from the Midwest. Chase

was chosen the chairman of the committee that drafted the convention address and resolutions, while Birney served as secretary of the convention. The convention confirmed Chase's status as the most influential man in the Ohio party.

The theme at the last convention was coalition with other antislavery politicians. It formed a committee of five, later broadened to twenty, to prepare a multiparty antislavery convention with a view to union. Initially no convention took place because the idea was unpopular with rank and file party members. "The ministers in our party, who contribute three-fourths of all the public speakers, are mostly opposed to venturing out politically: they will not do it: and they will keep the men with them," said Theodore Foster, coeditor of the Michigan *Signal of Liberty* newspaper, upon leaving the Chicago convention.⁶⁵

The last main new trend of the Liberty Party after 1844 was the embrace of the view that the Constitution was an antislavery document. This had begun with Alvan Stewart in the late 1830s. In 1844 Liberty editor William Goodell published his *Views of American Constitutional Law, in its Bearing Upon Slavery*. In 1845 Lysander Spooner, a religious anarchist closer to the Garrisonians in thought than to the Liberty men, published his tract *The Unconstitutionality of Slavery* in 1845. Spooner, who was a Deist rather than a Christian, believed in natural law and used it as the basis of his arguments. This was followed by a tract from Gerrit Smith the following year that basically plagiarized Spooner's ideas.

The idea that the Constitution was an antislavery document was based upon the text of the document combined with natural law and using reasoning from English common law and the Declaration of Independence. The argument was much more textually based than some of the judicial rulings of the last forty years, but was by no means an example of strict constructionism. But because the theorists refused to deal with the actual history of the three-fifths compromise that all lawyers were familiar with, it had very little influence outside of Liberty Party circles. And the fact that the Garrisonians had taken precisely the opposite position—"a pact with Hell"—tended to discredit this line of reasoning. But it was an example both of the frustration of the abolitionists as they failed to break out of the minority status as a political curiosity, and an example of creative thinking.⁶⁶

The reason for these efforts was simple: the mass of Americans in the nineteenth century had a reverential attitude toward the Constitution and regarded it much as Christians regard the Bible. Therefore, the Liberty men had to convince people that their abolitionist beliefs squared not only with the Bible but with the Constitution as well. The aim was first to convert elite opinion. Eventually a copy of Goodell's constitutional tract was mailed to every member of Congress. But it had little effect.

THE MEXICAN WAR, WILMOT PROVISIO, AND COALITION POLITICS

The first real crack in the façade of Slave Power control of the two parties came during 1844–45. Charles Francis Adams, the son of former president John

Q. Adams and grandson of John Adams, was a member of the lower house of the Massachusetts state legislature. Like his father, Charles Adams objected to the annexation of Texas on antislavery grounds. He formed a group of like-minded reformers within the Massachusetts Whig Party who became known as the Texas Group. In order to give the group a voice in influencing public opinion Adams launched his own newspaper, the *Boston Whig*, in the spring of 1846, with himself as editor. Boston was at this time home to several antislavery newspapers.⁶⁷

The Texas Group, by then numbering about a dozen activists in the party, began its attack on the Whig establishment in the summer of 1846 by criticizing Rep. Robert Winthrop, the representative of the textile industry within Congress, for voting funds for supplies to carry on the Mexican War. Charles Sumner, a young lawyer and the leading figure in the group after Adams, as well as the theoretician and orator of the movement, attacked Winthrop in the pages of the *Boston Courier* in a rather intemperate attack: "Blood! Blood! Is on the hands of the representative from Boston. Not all great Neptune's ocean can wash them clean." For this attack, Sumner was cut off from Boston's high society and became an outcast among the upper class social elite. In September 1846 at the state Whig convention, the Conscience Whigs nominated Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe, one of their numbers, to run against Winthrop as an independent candidate. Howe lost.⁶⁸

Whig parties in New Hampshire, Connecticut, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania all voted antiextensionist planks in their party platforms without causing any party splits. Antiextensionist refers to an opposition to the expansion of slavery outside of its then existing borders into new territories. Starting with the 1848 election, the dominant movement within antislavery politics was antiextensionism—the containment of slavery. Despite considerable antiwar sentiment among Northern Whigs, only 14 out of 77 Whig congressmen and only 2 out of 24 Whig senators voted against the initial appropriations for the war. Of the 14 congressmen, 5 each were from Massachusetts and Ohio. The war proved to be quite popular with the public and outside of a few antislavery districts, such as that of Joshua Giddings in the Western Reserve, a congressman could pay a heavy price for opposing the war as Abraham Lincoln came to find out.

On August 8, 1846, David Wilmot, a young first-term congressman from northern Pennsylvania, offered an amendment to a funding request for \$2 million to fund purchase of territory from Mexico as part of a settlement of the war. The amendment simply stated that no territory acquired as a result of the war would be open to slavery and used the language of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. Wilmot was a member of a group of about a dozen Northern Democratic representatives in their thirties who were opposed to the expansion of slavery. The oldest of this group was Preston King of New York, who had just turned forty and acted as the ringleader of the group. The resolution passed along sectional lines 83 to 64.⁶⁹

During the next four years, the Wilmot Proviso, which had lapsed with the funding bill coming to an end in 1846, was reintroduced many times and passed on each occasion in the House, but it never attained enough votes to pass in

the Senate. On February 15, 1847, the Proviso was reattached to a \$3 million appropriation bill in the House by a vote of 116 to 83.⁷⁰ But the Proviso, even if it was never enacted into law, provided a basis for forming a wider antislavery coalition—it provided Salmon Chase a basis on which to hold discussions with other antislavery politicians about future cooperation.⁷¹

When the Mexican War began in May 1846, Giddings was already beginning to think about building a reconstructed Whig Party by bringing in Independent Democrats like John P. Hale of New Hampshire, Liberty men, and Conscience Whigs or “ultras” from Massachusetts. Giddings began corresponding with John Palfrey of the latter group. The following month, in June 1846, John Q. Adams told Giddings that he was too old and weak to work effectively in Congress and he wanted Giddings to take his place as the conscience of the Whig Party. That same month Giddings wrote a letter to the *Ashtabula Sentinel* declaring that the annexation of Texas had dissolved the Union. Giddings would be much criticized for that letter and he would come to regret it greatly. Giddings spent ten days in New Hampshire in July 1846 at the invitation of John Hale helping to build the New Hampshire Alliance of Independent Democrats, Whigs, and Liberty men.⁷²

In August 1846 Giddings informed Ohio Liberty men that he would never vote for another slaveholder for president and that if a Southern Whig were nominated in 1848 he would bolt the party. That same summer, Giddings began corresponding regularly with Chase. Chase was suspicious of the Whig and thought that he meant only to absorb the Liberty men into the Whig Party. In November, Giddings wrote to both Charles Adams and to Chase urging antislavery unity after David Wilmot had offered his Proviso.⁷³

In 1847 Giddings still wanted to reform the Whig Party rather than bolt. He saw in Ohio Senator Thomas Corwin a potential antiwar challenger to Zachary Taylor for the nomination. *New York Tribune* editor Horace Greeley advised Giddings that Corwin was too timed to make a useful antiwar candidate against Taylor and that Corwin would not welcome free soil backing. In September 1847 Corwin made a speech in Ohio disavowing support for the Wilmot Proviso and referred to it as a “dangerous issue.” Greeley had proved to be correct. In early 1848 Giddings fastened upon Justice John McLean as a possible presidential candidate. It was not until Buffalo that Giddings was really disabused of this notion.⁷⁴

On December 5, 1847, Giddings presented a list of demands to the Whig candidate for speaker of the House, Robert Winthrop of Massachusetts, that he had drawn up with the help of John Palfrey and Amos Tuck. Winthrop wrote back that the demands were out of the question. Winthrop was elected speaker by a single vote after a representative from South Carolina walked out of the hall. The Whig press heaped calumny on the rebels, which was part of Giddings’s plan to renovate the party by forcing a split.⁷⁵

During the late antebellum period New York had the most divisive and faction-ridden politics of any state in the North, and probably in the entire

Union. Both major parties were divided into two major mutually antagonistic factions: the Seward and Fillmore factions among the Whigs and the Barnburners or Radicals and the Hunkers or Conservatives among the Democrats. The Barnburners were led by John Van Buren, the son of President Martin Van Buren, and by Silas Wright.⁷⁶ Martin Van Buren had led the faction until his retirement from politics after his loss of the nomination to Polk in 1844. The Hunkers earned their name because they were hungry for every bit of patronage they could get and the name was a corruption of “hungers.” The Barnburners had two basic grudges against the Hunkers: that they had supported Polk against Van Buren for the nomination in 1844 and that they had hogged New York’s share of patronage for themselves instead of sharing it with the whole party. Hunker opposition had cost Silas Wright his reelection as governor in 1846 and this was blamed on Polk as well as on the Hunkers.⁷⁷

The debate became ideological as the Barnburners supported the Proviso and the Hunkers opposed it. During the winter and spring of 1847, the New York legislature engaged in a debate on slavery extension that lasted for months. In 1847 the debate expanded to the party press in New York and became quite bitter and vitriolic. The two factions engaged in mutual name-calling. Silas Wright died of a heart attack while gardening on August 27, 1847. With the Barnburners still reeling from the death of their leader, the Hunkers took over the New York Democratic Party at the state party convention at Syracuse in September.⁷⁸

In January 1846 Chase began a correspondence with John Hale. It was the first of many correspondences that Chase would undertake with antislavery politicians from the two main parties over the next three years. Chase was not alone in corresponding with mainstream antislavery politicians. He was joined by John Greeleaf Whittier, the Quaker poet and former associate of Garrison, who personally knew many of the Massachusetts Conscience Whigs. Whittier began corresponding with Sumner in the summer of 1846. Whittier’s new job as “corresponding editor” or reporter for the *National Era* the following year gave him an excuse to meet with antislavery politicians.⁷⁹

The correspondence was used by Chase initially as a means of gathering insider intelligence on the workings of the New York Democratic Party, the Massachusetts Whig Party, and the nature of disputes within the two state parties. He also used it as a means of establishing his bona fides as the contact person within the Liberty Party. By combining an active reading of the press, along with suggestions from Bailey in Washington, and with his primary correspondents within the Barnburners and Conscience Whigs, Chase was able to look for someone from the two main parties to run as an independent nominee. Hale’s election to the Senate in the summer of 1846 helped Chase’s quest to form a coalition for containment.⁸⁰

In February 1847 Bailey met with Charles F. Adams who was visiting his father at the House. John Q. Adams had had a serious stroke while visiting Charles in Boston in November 20, 1846. Bailey and Charles Adams had a discussion about possible Whig presidential nominees in the lobby. Bailey

surprised Adams by preferring Justice McLean over war opponent Corwin. Bailey discussed with Adams the possibility of supporting the candidacy of McLean as an independent nominee backed by antislavery Whigs and Liberty men, provided that McLean came out clearly against slavery.⁸¹

Throughout 1847 Bailey advocated recruiting leading antislavery politicians from the two main parties for the Liberty Party. He wished to maintain the third party's independence from the two main parties while still creating a broad antislavery coalition. In May 1847 Bailey raised for the first time the possibility of going outside the party to nominate Hale as their presidential nominee. The other members of the Cincinnati clique also backed a coalition or fusion approach.⁸²

THE LIBERTY LEAGUE

Since 1845 a movement had been building within the Liberty Party to abandon its single-issue rule and become a general reform party centered around human rights. A discussion in the Liberty press before the Northwestern Liberty convention in June 1846 determined that there was little support for the idea outside of New York, Michigan, and Pittsburgh or among the national leadership. Among ordinary members the idea was unpopular.⁸³

The idea began to spread in the burned-over district of New York and gain converts. The most important of these was Gerrit Smith. As late as 1846, he put out a pamphlet condemning the idea of becoming a general reform party, but sometime in 1846 he changed his mind. He hinted at this change in a letter to Birney in April 1846 indicating that he had been brooding about the issue for some months. By 1847 he had converted.⁸⁴

Goodell went ahead and called a convention for June 1847 in Macedon Lock, New York to draw up a new reform agenda based on the strength of Smith's conversion. The platform was not only antislavery but also pacifist. Even two months before the formation of the Liberty League, James C. Jackson, a member of the Smith circle and influential in the state party, complained to Birney, "Practically the Liberty party is defunct. Its leading men are divided and distracted. There is no coherence in its ranks, only semblance."⁸⁵

Outside of New York there was very limited support for the new group, even in Michigan. And the leadership was quite hostile to it.⁸⁶ By making such radical reforms as part of their platform the reformers actually shrunk the potential electorate for the abolitionists rather than expanded it.

THE BUFFALO AND HERKIMER CONVENTIONS

As 1847 went on, the big question for the Liberty Party was if it would continue its traditional practice of early nominations, more than a year in advance of the election, or would they wait until 1848. Bailey and Chase both advocated putting

off the national convention until June 1848. Both Leavitt and Jackson raised suspicions in the party about Bailey. Leavitt had replaced Stewart as national chairman of the party because Stewart was ill and dying. Leavitt polled the Liberty National Council in June 1847 and announced—before hearing from a single Midwestern member—that the majority favored a fall convention. Leavitt then set the date as October 20, 1847 for Buffalo.⁸⁷

In late July 1847, Hale went to Boston and met with Leavitt, Joseph C. Lovejoy (brother of Owen and Elijah), and Stanton of the *Emancipator* and with Lewis Tappan, and Whittier, the political reporter for the *National Era*, at the office of the *Emancipator*. They all declared him to be “with the Liberty party in principles, measures & feeling.”⁸⁸ This paved the way for him receiving the Liberty nomination at the convention. Hale was the candidate of both the traditionalists and the Cincinnati clique. He was acceptable to the former because of both his merger with the New Hampshire Liberty Party and his answers to his group of interrogators. He was acceptable to the latter because of his Democratic past—which branded him as both a pragmatist and someone sharing the same basic political principles as the clique.⁸⁹

Bailey, as was customary for him, did not attend the Liberty convention in Buffalo, but he did urge Chase to attend and to take charge of the platform committee. Bailey merely wished to hold the party together, long enough to be able to organize fusion with antislavery faction(s) from one or both of the two main parties. Chase did attend the Buffalo convention in October. All the three main factions of the party were present; the traditionalists, by far the most numerous of the three factions, became the most influential of the three.

The convention lasted for two days with the platform being debated on the first day and nominations held on the second. The second day, when it came to the question of making nominations, the traditionalists voted with the Liberty Leaguers to make nominations at the convention rather than waiting until the spring. But then they switched their support to the coalitionists to elect Hale over Smith by a sizeable margin, 103 to 44, as the nominee.⁹⁰ Smith attacked the Proviso, and through it, fusion. “A license to slavery to live any where, is a license to it to live every where. Call you the Wilmot Proviso man an anti-slavery man? He is a pro-slavery man,” argued Smith.⁹¹

The same month, the Barnburners held their own faction convention in Herkimer, New York, not far from Syracuse. They had walked out of the Syracuse convention of the state Democratic Party the month before. The Syracuse convention and accounts of it in the press had touched off a raw nerve among ordinary Democrats. More than 4,000 Barnburners showed up at the railroad station in the tiny town of Herkimer. Van Buren orated to the crowd, a skill that his father—the “little magician”—had never developed, and a convention was held. The convention adopted the slogan that would dominate American politics for the next dozen years: “Free Trade, Free Labor, Free Soil, Free Speech, and Free Men.” Although they did not know it at the time, they had also named their future party.⁹²

Martin Van Buren still had to endorse the Wilmot Proviso. He kept the party guessing, until in December, he suddenly moved out of his estate in rural New York to take up quarters in the Julian Hotel in central New York City. He wanted to be closer to the action and within easy reach of the insurgents.⁹³

As 1847 ended, the coalitionists had to wait upon events in the two main parties. If nominations were acceptable to their two main potential partners, the Barnburners and the Conscience Whigs, they would have to wait for another opportunity and stick with Hale in 1848. If the Barnburners defected, the party would have enough strength for a dramatic increase in the antislavery vote.

Fusion and Free Soil, 1848

THE CONDITIONS RIPEN FOR MERGER

Much of the future prospects for the creation of a wider antislavery coalition depended upon the actions of the two main parties, more specifically, their presidential nominees and platforms that came out of the national conventions. The Barnburners and Conscience Whigs continued to organize and prepare for a possible split with their parent parties and continued to keep in touch with each other and with Chase and Bailey. A peace treaty was negotiated between the United States and Mexico and signed at Hidalgo Guadalupe. The United States resolved the territorial issue by simply buying the territories that it wanted from Mexico at the cost of \$15 million and the assumption of the approximately \$3.25 million in American private claims against the Mexican government. The treaty was transmitted to the Senate for debate. On the day it arrived, February 21, 1848, the House was debating a resolution of praise for the military. Rep. John Q. Adams, the leader of the antislavery movement in Congress since the mid-1830s, stood up to speak and then collapsed. He was taken out of the House and died two days later. His successor, Joshua Giddings, was at Adams's deathbed when he died. As the last link with the revolutionary era, he was granted the praise and recognition in death that so often had eluded him in life.¹

The Whigs were up for winning the presidency again and hence looked forward to repeating their 1840 strategy with another victorious general—and they had the war to produce one or more. President Polk was reduced to playing off Whig generals against one another. In the summer of 1846, he ordered Winfield Scott to prepare for war. Scott was slow in preparing and his excuses

were leaked to the press by the Democrats, making him a figure of public ridicule. In 1847 Polk had stripped Zachary Taylor's army in Northern Mexico of units in order to create an expeditionary force commanded by Winfield Scott at Veracruz. Taylor, a major slaveholder from Louisiana known to his troops as "Old Rough and Ready," had been totally apolitical up until then. In fact, he claimed never to have voted before 1848. Whereas Scott, known as "Old Fuss and Feathers," had been a candidate for the Whig nomination in 1840 but had lost out to another general. Taylor had captured the favor of the press and the public in February 1847 with his victory over Santa Anna in the Battle of Buena Vista where he was outnumbered. Brilliant organization by his managers in the formation of "Taylor clubs" across the county ensured that Scott did not have a chance to compete despite being the real hero of the Mexican War. Taylor's only serious competition for the nomination was Henry Clay. But even Clay partisans like Abraham Lincoln believed that when it came to "availability" (electability), Taylor beat Clay. Taylor had already put an end to serious speculation about Justice John McLean as a candidate with his early victories in 1846.²

During the spring of 1848, as the Whig convention approached, Northern antislavery Whigs were concentrating their hopes on Scott as a candidate rather than McLean. Scott, born in Virginia, was a Southerner and a war hero but not a slaveholder. Thus, he seemed perfect. Many of Clay's supporters were telling him that his best prospect for high office was to run on the bottom of the ticket with Scott. To many antislavery Whigs in the North, this would be acceptable; but others remembered the premature death of Harrison and were not so convinced. But Chase still preferred McLean as a presidential nominee for an antislavery coalition. Chase attended the Ohio Democratic convention as an observer in January.

On May 17 Chase announced plans for an Ohio Free Territory convention to be held in Columbus on June 21, shortly after the Democratic and Whig conventions had met. If things worked out right, he would have many free soilers from both parties not happy with their parties' nominations and ready to bolt. He had the backing of over 3,000 men who had signed a petition calling for the convention when he issued his call. He carefully arranged for an Ohio Liberty Party gathering to be held next door so that he could arrange for a "spontaneous alliance."³

The Conscience Whigs in Massachusetts were united in support of favorite son Daniel Webster, who had support only in his own state and New Hampshire. But some of the Cotton Whigs like Abbot Lawrence, the party leader, were backing Taylor as the candidate most likely to win. The Conscience Whigs had failed to pass a resolution in support of the Wilmot Proviso at the state Whig convention in the fall of 1847. Webster was happy to have their support, but was closer to Lawrence than to them and had no intention of supporting any type of free soil movement. In the South, Whigs were divided between Taylor and Clay. Taylor appealed to many voters of both parties and had said little about his political beliefs other than to state that he was not an "ultra-Whig," meaning that he retained his independence.⁴

At the Democratic convention in Baltimore in late May, there were three serious candidates: James Buchanan, Polk's secretary of state and a future president from Pennsylvania; Lewis Cass, who had been Jackson's secretary of war, and then ambassador to France, and then senator from Michigan, a war hero from the Battle of Thames in 1813; and Levi Woodbury, the leader of the moderate faction in New Hampshire. Cass had originally supported the Wilmot Proviso, but then had moved to kill it in the Senate. The Barnburners probably would have been happy only with the nomination of Woodbury, but Cass was the worst of the three as far as they were concerned. Cass had supported Polk over Van Buren at the convention in 1844 and they blamed Cass for their champion losing the nomination.

The convention began with a credentials fight over the New York delegations—both the Hunkers and the Barnburners had sent complete delegations, thereby forcing the convention to make a decision as to which was valid. After some debate, the convention ruled that the two delegations would share New York's votes between them. Both delegations rejected the decision but maintained their seats nonetheless. Martin Van Buren had advised the delegation to walkout immediately upon their credentials being rejected, so as to appear to be leaving on principle and avoid accusations of bad faith later on. But instead, they waited until Cass had won the nomination on the eighth ballot to denounce the nomination and storm out. The Democrats went on to include an ambiguous plank in their platform regarding slavery that could be interpreted differently by different people.⁵

After the Democratic convention was finished and the walkout of the Barnburners covered in the press, eight key activists of the Conscience Whigs met in Adam's office at the *Boston Whig* on May 27, 1848, and mapped out their strategy for the convention. They decided that if Taylor or any other candidate, not opposed to the extension of slavery, should be nominated at Philadelphia, they would call for a Conscience Whig convention based on the Proviso to be held in Worcester, Massachusetts on June 28.⁶

The Whig convention began in Philadelphia two weeks after the Democratic convention began. Thousands of Whigs from all over the country flooded into the city and filled every hotel, boardinghouse, and many private homes. On June 8, the second day of the convention, six names were formally announced as contenders for the presidential nomination: two were the party's remaining generals, two were its perennial candidates from the senate, and two were dark horses. There were a total of 279 votes, with 140 needed to win.

On the first ballot three-fourths of Taylor's support came from the South, where he won 85 out of 111 delegates; Clay won the remainder of the Southern delegates. At the end of the second ballot it was obvious that the Conscience Whig's favorite was not going to be chosen and neither was Clayton. But they could still hope that Scott would be chosen rather than Taylor or Clay, so there was no walkout yet. The next ballot was not held until the following day, Friday.

On the third ballot, things began to shift. On the fourth and final ballot, delegates defected from all the other candidates but Scott, to give Taylor a total of 171, 63 for Scott, and only 35 for Clay, with a humiliating 13 for Webster.⁷

Then the convention got interesting. Charles Allen, a Conscience Whig from Massachusetts stood up and had his say. "We have a man who will continue the rule of slavery for another four years." Massachusetts "rejected the nominee of the Convention, and . . . Massachusetts would spurn the bribe that was to be offered to her [of a vice presidential nominee] . . . I say we cannot consent that this go forth as the unanimous vote of this convention." After several interruptions he continued. Because not a single Southern delegate had voted for a Northern Whig for the nomination, he declared, "The free states will no longer submit. I declare to this convention my belief that the Whig Party of the United States is here and this day dissolved." Then Henry Wilson, another Massachusetts Conscience Whig, stood up on a table and amid the confusion and din caused by an antislavery resolution shouted out a short speech. "I am here prepared to support a Whig for president. But we have nominated a gentleman, who is anything but a Whig, and, sir, I will go home, and so help me God, I will do all I can to defeat the election of that candidate."⁸

The convention got on with its business—the nomination of a running mate for Taylor. The delegates did not bother to vote on a platform, so as not to tie down Taylor to any policy commitments that could hurt his chance of election. They then adjourned to celebrate and parade. Fifteen angry delegates from Massachusetts, Maine, New York, New Jersey, and Ohio remained behind in the Chinese Theater where the convention was held to plan a splinter movement. They authorized the Ohio delegates to ask the Free Territory convention, that Chase had called for, in Columbus on June 21, to ask for a general convention of free soilers from all parties to be held at Buffalo in early August.⁹

THREE CONVENTIONS IN JUNE

Three conventions were held within days of each other in late June in Ohio, Massachusetts, and New York in order to organize for a new party. Each party or faction had to have a convention in order to organize itself for a general fusion convention to be held in Buffalo on August 8.

The first of these conventions was a Free Territory convention that was held next to an Ohio Liberty convention in Columbus on June 21. Before it opened, every county Whig party and eight of the twelve Whig newspapers in the Western Reserve had repudiated the Whig ticket. Chase had planned it so that free soil Democrats and Whigs from the Midwest could have a convention and then join together with the Liberty delegates, who would have authorized dissolving the party and forming a general antislavery fusion party at Buffalo. Joshua Giddings, the leader of antislavery Whigs in Ohio, was away attending the Conscience Whig convention at Worcester, Massachusetts and so Chase's biggest rival for

leadership of the Ohio movement was gone. Chase drafted the convention's address and its antiextensionist platform, which was very similar to the platform in Buffalo that he also had a hand in writing. About a thousand delegates attended the convention. The "spontaneous alliance" of the antislavery delegates from the two gatherings went just as planned.¹⁰

Upon returning to New York the rebel Barnburner delegation was met at the Manhattan train station by a crowd of well-wishers. From there they went to City Hall Park to deliver fiery speeches before a crowd estimated to be 12,000 strong. A few days later the delegation formally requested that the faction repudiate the Cass nomination—which it did. The Barnburners then called a nominating convention of their own for June 22 at Utica. The faction press went into motion whipping up emotions against Cass. The more reserved Liberty Party's *National Era* proclaimed on June 8: "The Baltimore Convention has accomplished a feat which will long be remembered among the remarkable events in the political history of the country. It has broken up the Democratic party of the nation."¹¹ This turned out to be very premature.

Democratic dissidents from Massachusetts, Connecticut, Ohio, Illinois, and Wisconsin as well as a handful of Clay supporters from the New York Whig Party showed up in Utica. The crowd there was much smaller than at City Hall Park weeks earlier, numbering only hundreds. John Van Buren suggested Taylor as a possible Barnburner nominee, but he was the only one. His father sent a nineteen-page letter to the convention demurring that he never wanted to be a candidate for public office again.

It was a legal analysis of the slavery extension question, meant to serve as a rebuke to the South and a justification for a Northern sectional party. He also wrote that Congress was empowered to keep slavery out of the territories and the District of Columbia. Van Buren had labored over the letter, composing two drafts, before sending the final version. Benjamin F. Butler of Massachusetts read the entire letter to the crowd, who figured that Van Buren's rejection was merely for form's sake. Both John Dix, a senior Barnburner leader, and Franklin Pierce, the future dough-boy president from New Hampshire who had expelled Hale from the party, also refused to contest the nomination—but neither of them labored over their "rejection" as Van Buren had. The Utica convention ended by nominating Martin Van Buren as its presidential nominee and former governor Henry Dodge of Wisconsin as vice president. Dodge rejected the nomination a week later. This convention was the only one of the three preparatory conventions to make nominations.¹²

On June 28 some 5,000 Conscience Whigs from Massachusetts, Ohio, and elsewhere, along with a few Massachusetts Democrats met at Worcester in central Massachusetts. They met in the shade of the Worcester Lunatic Asylum (a tidbit of information that Cotton editors never omitted when describing the convention). Charles Sumner gave the main oration, the start of his career of long-winded speeches. The convention named Charles F. Adams chairman of a committee to organize the Buffalo convention. At the speakers' table sat Giddings, Wilson, Charles Allen, Charles Adams, and Sumner. The leaders from the

three conventions now had five weeks to communicate and coordinate the Buffalo convention.¹³

Individual Democrats in Massachusetts, Vermont, and New Hampshire and factions from the Whigs in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island all joined the Buffalo movement as well as Clay supporters in New York. The *National Era* reported in its July 20 issue that it did not have enough room to print even brief reports of all the Free Soil meetings in Ohio. But there was much Whig and Liberty Party opposition to Van Buren as a candidate because of his perceived Southern sympathies while he was president in the 1830s. The proposed candidates to compete for the nomination at Buffalo were Van Buren, Hale, and McLean. McLean was supported by Ohio Whigs and by Chase, Bailey, and Adams. By late July it was apparent to Chase that if they wanted to carry the Barnburners *in toto* as a faction, they would need to nominate Van Buren. So he began drumming up support for a Van Buren-McLean ticket. But McLean refused to accept second place on the ticket and withdrew his name from consideration.¹⁴

At the time of the fusion into the Free Soil Party, the Liberty parties in New England consisted mainly of former Democrats. The New England Liberty parties had served a useful role as a pressure group on the two main parties during the 1840s. As a result of this, Liberty men slipped quite comfortably into the Free Soil Party with its radical Democratic tinge.¹⁵

THE BUFFALO FREE SOIL CONVENTION

The crowds of people that wandered into Buffalo for the Free Soil convention of August 9–10 have been estimated at between ten thousand and double that figure. They came to be a part of history. A smaller group of several hundred, more reminiscent of the repeated national Liberty conventions that had met in the city over the previous seven years, came to organize a party. The crowd was kept occupied in the city park where the “convention” took place by a string of orators while the real work of the convention was conducted in the nearby tent set up. This real convention consisted of a Committee of Conferees numbering some 400 men from the three parties and every state in the North and every congressional district. The formula was that each state was represented by a delegation of six, and each congressional district was represented by a delegation of three—one from each party. The platform was largely written by three men: Benjamin Butler of Massachusetts, whom Chase had picked to be in charge of the task; Chase, who reviewed Butler’s work and made suggestions; and Adams. Thus, each incoming party was represented in composing the platform of the new party. The platform was ready by the morning of the second day. Ironically, considering Chase’s opposition to the Liberty League and its multi-issue reform platform, the platform not only opposed slavery extension but also endorsed cheap postage (a pet cause of Elizur Wright), cheap government, river and harbor improvements, tariff reform, and

free homesteads. It had something in it for everyone. Ben Butler read the platform to the committee in the sweltering tent and he was cheered after each plank.¹⁶

The only two candidates for presidential nominee were John P. Hale as the Liberty candidate, and Van Buren as the Barnburner candidate. Hale had written both Leavitt and Chase indicating his willingness to step down as a Liberty candidate if this would facilitate the formation of a wider coalition. The Liberty Party, whose leaders were all present at the convention, formally dissolved the party so that technically the Hale candidacy was dissolved with it. After a letter from Van Buren had been read to the committee, Stanton announced that Hale had withdrawn as the Liberty candidate. A single informal ballot of the Committee of Conferees was taken. Van Buren had 244, Hale 183, and 42 votes were scattered among various candidates. Liberty men, except for Stanton, Chase, and Leavitt, voted for Hale. The Barnburners voted for Van Buren. And the Whigs split their votes—most supporting Van Buren—between the two candidates. Joshua Leavitt then secured Van Buren's unanimous nomination by acclamation as the crowd cheered.¹⁷

Chase had warned Hale before the October 1847 Liberty convention that he should not accept the Liberty nomination if he wished to win the nomination of a wider antislavery coalition. Hale delayed accepting the Liberty nomination until January 1848 and in his acceptance letter indicated that should a broader coalition form, he would gladly step aside. Hale biographer Richard Sewell has speculated that Hale may have taken Chase's advice and deliberately accepted the Liberty nomination in order to avoid a later nomination. Hale was active in the Senate and did not have time to campaign in a race that he was doomed to lose badly.¹⁸

The Committee then took up the task of nominating a vice president. It decided that the Whigs should be given the opportunity of choosing his running mate and the choice should go to someone from the West. Ohio nominated Giddings for vice president but withdrew the nomination after the other Midwestern states went for Adams who was then nominated by acclamation. The Ohio men convinced Adams that the vice president need not actually be from Ohio, but only be Ohio's choice. But for many of the Whigs, Adams's recently dead father was a hero and he was nominated largely as a tribute to his father's battle against the gag rule and defense of the *Amistad* rebels in 1840.¹⁹

After the nominations were completed the results were announced to the crowd of attendees outside. Ben Butler gave a long speech praising Van Buren, especially his qualities as a gentleman farmer. After Butler finished, Leavitt rose to speak. Leavitt then gave a brief overview of the history of the Liberty Party and argued that he had acted honorably by Hale. After moving that Van Buren's nomination be made unanimous, he concluded with a cheer, "The Liberty Party is not dead but TRANSLATED." The convention closed with a torchlight parade through Buffalo behind a banner that was inscribed:

'87 and '48

JEFFERSON AND VAN BUREN

No Compromise.²⁰

The Liberty leaders in Buffalo gave Leavitt the responsibility of writing a statement explaining their actions at the convention. He wrote his *Address to the Members of the Liberty Party of the United States* while his train to Boston was held over in Rochester. Hale upheld Leavitt's Buffalo account of the nomination in response to a charge by Tappan that the Liberty Party had abandoned him. Fifteen years later, Leavitt conceded to Chase that Van Buren may have been "the best we could get at the time."²¹

If the Liberty Party was translated, it was translated into a language that some political abolitionists could not understand. The Liberty Leaguers held another convention in June 1848 to confirm the presidential nomination of Smith. Wright endorsed the Leaguers in the pages of his paper, *Chronotype*, but two months later, abandoned them for the Free Soil Party, as the Buffalo convention had named the new party. Wright referred to the Free Soilers as being composed "of the honest Whigs and Democrats and Liberty men." He thought that only the Free Soilers had a realistic chance to counter "the very absurdity, mendacity, and general rascality of the Cass and Taylor factions."²² Tappan ended up abandoning the Free Soilers for the Liberty League, which now took over the vacant Liberty Party designation. The party remained in existence through the 1860 election with either Smith or Goodell as its presidential nominee every four years. In 1855 it changed its name to the Radical Abolition Party. Smith never did any serious campaigning; the party existed only so as to give hardcore political abolitionists like himself a candidate to vote for. Most of these came from central New York State. Smith never won more than 2,000 to 3,000 votes as a presidential candidate—2,545 votes in 1848, but did better when running for other offices.²³

Following the 1848 Free Soil campaign, most of the national figures from the Liberty Party, with the notable exceptions of Chase and Bailey, left antislavery politics or joined Smith's party. Wright was busy in Free Soil politics as an associate editor and then business editor at the *Commonwealth* and then editor until 1852. Tappan largely abandoned political abolitionism to devote himself to church abolitionism. His biographer conceded that Tappan "never fully accepted nor understood political activity and his greatest contribution to abolitionism was in the nonpolitical field."²⁴

Northwestern Liberty Party historian Vernon Volpe argues that Chase brought the Liberty Party—even in his home state of Ohio—unwillingly into the Free Soil Party. Antislavery historian Richard Sewell disputes this by arguing that Leavitt came voluntarily into the new fusion party.²⁵ Judging from the evidence, it is fair to say that Chase used his position within the Ohio Liberty Party to arrange the merger with the other two factions. He then left the other Liberty parties in other states a choice: they could either continue their separate existence or they could attempt the merger and see where it led them based upon the success of the New Hampshire Alliance and similar arrangements in New England. Leavitt had to be dragged into fusion, but he supported it because he really wanted to accomplish something against the Slave Power using political

means. The old guard of the Liberty Party led by Leavitt, Stanton, and Lewis Tappan had all been suspicious of Giddings's motives, partly because they never really believed that he intended to leave the Whigs.²⁶ Once the Buffalo platform was passed he was able to bring along most Liberty men with him.

THE 1848 CAMPAIGN AND ELECTION

In the late twentieth century the Free Soil Party and early Republican Party have often been faulted for being racist. There were two reasons: first, they had to operate within an electorate that was racist and *negrophobic*. Second, many of the candidates of the parties were infected with the racism of the time based upon the prevailing scientific theories of race and intelligence. But even among the Free Soil Party the attitudes varied quite a bit among the three founding factions. The Barnburners were consciously a racist party that always argued that they supported restrictions on slavery out of concern for Northern whites rather than out of concern for the slaves. David Wilmot was among the most explicit of candidates in arguing this. The Barnburners were interested in protecting Northern whites from unfair labor competition from slaves, and this is quite a legitimate concern. But many Northerners wanted to keep free blacks out of the North and the West as well, and the party reflected this thinking.

Historian James Bilotta traces free-soil doctrine to the thinking of Thomas Jefferson, Henry Clay, and David Wilmot. The first two were slaveholders who were opposed to slavery in theory but continued to practice it and supported colonization. Wilmot was a Jacksonian Democrat who reflected the thinking of Jefferson. All three believed blacks to be physically and intellectually inferior. Clay may not have had a great effect on the thinking of Conscience Whigs—they were more likely to be influenced by Daniel Webster (whom they revolted against inside the Massachusetts Whig Party) and John Q. Adams—but he did have a great influence on the thinking of Whigs from the border states such as Lincoln.²⁷

At the Buffalo convention a delegation of black leaders led by Frederick Douglass, the famous fugitive slave and abolitionist showed up. Many Barnburners wanted all “niggers” excluded from the convention. Others wanted the delegates excluded but Douglass could remain as he was famous—proof that celebrity worship was as strong in the nineteenth century as it is today. In the end the entire delegation remained and was even respectfully applauded.²⁸

“I speak not of the condition of the slave,” wrote Rep. George Rathburn of New York, “whether the effect of slavery is beneficial or injurious to him. I am looking to its effects upon the white man.” Rathburn published a campaign book, *The Free Soil Question and Its Importance to the Voters of the Free States*, for the 1848 election. William C. Bryant, editor of the influential New York *Evening Post*, was a Barnburner who actively campaigned for the Free Soil Party in 1848. He ran an ad in his paper entitled “Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men, Forever.” The text went on to claim that “the soil for the white man and not for the

Negro...this is a movement to exclude a gentleman of the South with his Negroes from these territories, and to admit the Irish, Scotch, Germans, and Dutch...Who shall have it [the West], white men or slaves?" The author of the Proviso, David Wilmot, told a Barnburner rally in Auburn, "The negro race already occupy enough of this fair continent.; let us keep what remains for ourselves, and our children—for the emigrant that seeks our shores..." And Barnburners often dubbed the Proviso the "White Man's Resolution."²⁹

The Conscience Whigs had more complicated attitudes toward blacks. Many, including future Free Soil Rep. Horace Mann and author Richard Henry Dana, believed them to be intellectually inferior, but had a genuine humanitarian interest in ending slavery. Dana was a personal friend of racial theorist Louis Agassiz. Others accepted them as colleagues. This was true of the Liberty men as well, although the abolitionists were more likely to accept the blacks as full colleagues and equals. Among the abolitionists the attitude toward blacks did not seem to be tied to any particular political stance. Gerrit Smith's latest biographer argues that he had completely equal relationships with Douglass and with James McCune Smith, a black physician and Liberty man. This is in contrast to Garrison's relationship with Douglass, once Douglass began to exhibit independence and wanted to cease being a lecturer for Garrison and stopped deferring to Garrison's political opinions. These Free Soilers whom Bilotta considers to have been most sympathetic to blacks include George Julian, Owen Lovejoy, Elihu Washburne, Joshua Giddings, Salmon Chase, Edward, and Ben Wade, and newspaper editors Zebina Eastman and Joseph Forrest of the *Chicago Democrat*. Note that none of these were Barnburners and most were either Liberty men or Whigs from the Midwest.³⁰

The appearance of the Free Soil Party created an interesting dilemma for Northern blacks in New England and New York. With the arrival of the Free Soil Party, they had candidates who had a good chance of being elected as opposed to the Liberty Party of Gerrit Smith, which better reflected their views. They were finally getting a chance to experience the dilemmas that white voters experienced. Bilotta claims that the most important black abolitionists supported Smith's party rather than the Free Soilers.³¹

Garrison and his colleague Wendell Phillips gave very guarded approval to the appearance of the Free Soil Party in 1848. They were happy to see most of the abolitionists out of the political business after the campaign was over. But much of their attitude was probably dictated by jealousy. Garrison called it "a cheering sign of the times." They were glad to support any political effort that people like Smith and Tappan were opposed to. Earlier the Garrisonians had become informal allies of the Conscience Whigs from 1846 to 1848 by attacking the Cotton Whigs and by holding joint anti-Texas and antiwar meetings. But the more radical Garrisonians like Abby Kelley and Stephen Foster did not support the Free Soilers at all.³²

An average of two Free Soil rallies a day took place from early August 1848 until the election in November. Giddings averaged sixty miles per day with at

least two major speeches of several hours length each day, throughout the campaign. Benjamin Wade joined with the Democrats to nominate a candidate to oppose Giddings in his congressional district. Giddings claimed that the Whig Party had abandoned its true traditions by nominating a nonparty man like General Taylor. The conservative farmers and mechanics who made up the district's electorate agreed with him and elected him by a margin of 3,000 votes over the combined opposition candidate. Giddings's fellow antiwar Whig Joseph Root was also elected on the Free Soil ticket in the Reserve.³³

The two main parties campaigned mostly on economic issues such as the tariff and attempted to ignore the new intruders as much as possible as they had ignored the Liberty men before them. They also ignored slavery except when prompted or when they could use it to their advantage—primarily in the South. Their only concession to the appearance of the new party was to have their candidates argue that a vote for the Free Soilers was a wasted vote that only served to help elect the candidates of the other main party. They were thus pioneering the time-honored American approach to third parties. Congressman Lincoln stumped Illinois and Massachusetts on behalf of Taylor, urging Whigs not to waste their votes on the Free Soilers. Democrats who were quite close to the Barnburners in their political beliefs did the same in Ohio, Missouri, and Connecticut. The Barnburners had little sway with Democratic voters outside of New York, Vermont, Wisconsin, and Illinois.³⁴

In some areas Cass was sold as a Proviso man, even though he started the concept of "popular (or squatter) sovereignty" and was running on this as his position on slavery. The Conscience Whigs had little influence outside of New England and Ohio—in fact outside of New England, New York, and the upper Midwest did the Free Soil Party win many votes other than from Liberty men. Nativism entered a national campaign in a major way for the first time with both the Democrats and Free Soilers accusing the Whigs of being anti-immigrant. This was much more of an issue in the North than in the South.³⁵

Daniel Webster was not excited about the nomination. But he refused to endorse the rebel party both out of antipathy towards Van Buren and concern about his standing in the Whig Party. On September 1, 1848, Webster finally endorsed Taylor publicly by making a statement from his estate: "That the leader of the Free Spoil party should have so suddenly become the leader of the Free Soil party would be a joke to shake his sides and mine."³⁶

The Barnburners were the only one of the three factions of the new party composed primarily of professional politicians as compared with reformers. With revenge in their hearts, the Barnburners systematically campaigned in New York using their machine to locate, persuade, and win voters. The Massachusetts Conscience Whig leaders campaigned enthusiastically for Van Buren throughout the state. They were joined by Joshua Leavitt. He not only served on the state central committee of the Free Soil Party, but also founded Free Soil clubs throughout the state and made many speeches on behalf of Van Buren and local candidates. Throughout Pennsylvania and New England, the Free Soilers

campaigned in rural areas and in small and medium towns and left the main cities to the two main parties. John Buren and Charles Adams campaigned across the North on behalf of the former's father. Adams spent most of his time in New England and Ohio and Van Buren campaigned strongly in New York and the Midwest. Even in Missouri, Frank Blair, Jr. campaigned for the Free Soilers. This was one of six slave states where the new party appeared on the ballot. Many Free Soilers including their leaders hoped to capture New York, Massachusetts, Ohio, and Vermont based on their strong organizations in these states and the electorate.³⁷

While the Free Soilers correctly picked the states in which they would have their best performance, they were overly optimistic—even delusional—about the projected results. Taylor exceeded Clay's vote of four years before everywhere, whereas Cass fell short of Polk's total. Cass lost by 36 electoral votes. The Free Soil vote was crucial in only two states: New York and Ohio—giving the former to Taylor and the latter to Cass. Had this not occurred Taylor would still have had a majority—although smaller—of the electoral vote. The Free Soilers outpolled Cass in three states: Vermont, Massachusetts, and New York. In New York the Free Soil vote was from Barnburners; in Ohio it was overwhelmingly from Whigs; elsewhere it was more mixed. In Massachusetts the non-Liberty Free Soil vote came almost evenly from the two main parties. Only Massachusetts and Ohio had large numbers of Whig defect to the Free Soilers. In Vermont it came over twice as much proportionately from Democrats as from Whigs, in Rhode Island three times as much, and in New Hampshire five times as much. The Free Soil vote for the North, as a whole, amounted to 14 percent of the vote and for the country as a whole it was 10 percent of the vote, demonstrating how much of the national vote was found in the North. The Free Soilers won a plurality of the vote in 32 counties stretching from western Massachusetts and Vermont westward along the southern shore of the Great Lakes to northern Illinois and southeastern Wisconsin. By region, this was surprisingly only three counties in New England, eight in the Middle Atlantic States, and twenty-one in the Midwest.³⁸ Van Buren's presence on the ticket was crucial to winning Democratic votes in many states where loyal Democratic voters crossed over with him to the Free Soil Party. This showed that the Free Soilers would be dependent on continued Democratic dissatisfaction in order to keep their movement alive over the next four years. In reality, the Free Soil Party was not so much a fusion as a federation, with different state parties reflecting different characters depending on which faction most of their members came from. But in some states the state tickets were deliberately mixed with candidates from different factions. Unlike the Liberty Party, the Free Soil Party actually ran better at the national level than at the state level.³⁹

Nationally Van Buren polled 291,804 popular votes or about five times as many as Birney had received in 1844. Over half of these came from two states: New York and Massachusetts. Only in one state, Vermont, did the Free Soilers popular vote come within 10 percentage votes—and then just barely, of winning a

single electoral vote. Vermont was the state with the highest Free Soil vote in percentage terms at 29 percent, followed by Massachusetts at 28 percent, and almost 27 percent of the vote in Wisconsin, which was voting for president for the first time, 26 percent in New York, Michigan with 16 percent, 15 percent in New Hampshire, 13 percent in Illinois and only 11 percent in Ohio. In absolute terms, the largest votes were by far in New York with 120,510, in Massachusetts with 38,058 and in Ohio with 35,354. In two major midwestern cities, Cleveland and Chicago, Van Buren outpolled both major party candidates. Party loyalty was the best explanatory variable when analyzing the vote. Taylor retained 98.2 percent of the Whig vote from 1844 nationally, and 95.3 percent in the North. Cass retained only 85.9 percent of the 1844 vote nationally (81.4 percent in the free states and 93.8 percent in the slave states). This was caused by the greater defection of Democrats to Van Buren in New York and the Midwest than was the corresponding defection of Whigs to Van Buren in New England and the Midwest.⁴⁰

But unlike the Liberty Party, the Free Soilers managed to elect eight congressmen in 1848 and another four as part of wider coalitions—and they usually voted with the Free Soilers. In only two states, Massachusetts and Ohio, did they succeed in electing more than one congressman—and in the former the second member was part of a coalition.⁴¹ From 1840 to 1848 the United States had remained a two-party system at the federal level, while certain states—primarily in New England—had a three-party system at the state level. In 1848 the Free Soilers (temporarily) converted this into a three-party system at the federal level.⁴²

Nationally the Free Soilers hurt the Democrats much worse than they hurt the Whigs. The Whigs ran farther behind the Democrats than they had in 1844 only in four states: New Hampshire, Michigan, Ohio, and Indiana. Elsewhere the defeat of the Democrats was larger or the latter's victory was smaller. In the two new states of Wisconsin and Iowa the Free Soilers hurt the Democrats in Wisconsin, but seemed to hurt the Whigs in Iowa compared with past congressional races. Cass lost 18 percent of the Polk vote in the North or some 150,000 voters. Taylor lost a substantial share of the Clay vote only in five Northern states—from 12 to 19 percent. At least 58 percent of the Free Soil vote came from ordinary Democrats, and some 60 percent of this was in New York. But even with the New York vote subtracted, more Democrats voted for Van Buren in 1848 than did Whigs or Liberty men. But Liberty men voted for Van Buren in much higher proportions than did former Democrats and former Whigs. Whig Free Soilers were convinced that either McLean or Hale would have received more votes than Van Buren did. But this is impossible to know with any certainty and probably not true. Many Whigs, even those who joined the Free Soilers, were never convinced of Van Buren's sincerity when it came to the antislavery cause.⁴³

Most historians, when they look at the 1848 election, look backward from 1860 and see it as the beginning of the Republican (or antislavery) majority. Rayback declared that “[t]he Free Soilers campaign in that election had made the

further spread of slavery unthinkable and impossible.” But this judgment ignores the Dred Scott decision of 1857. But Sean Wilentz, looking not backward in time, but across the Atlantic to Europe, compares the Free Soil insurgency to the failed revolutions of the “springtime of nations” in Europe that year. Wilentz dubs the Free Soil election “the American 1848.” In Van Buren, aged 65, they had a very reluctant leader who wanted to enjoy his retirement and was willing to interrupt it both for reasons of principle and revenge.⁴⁴ The Free Soilers had made a revolt, not a revolution. They could now see if they could expand their bridgehead or lose it.

Coalition, Compromise, and Collapse

STRATEGY

After the Free Soil election of 1848, the new party had three logical choices in regard to its future: it could stand alone, proud and independent, like the Liberty Party; it could form a coalition with the Democrats; or it could form a coalition with the Whigs. If it was to form a coalition it could do this on two separate bases: ideology or bargaining. Ideology meant forming a coalition based on the ideology affinity of either the leaders or the members of a particular state party. This could be very divisive as the party contained former members from both main parties whose sole shared affinity was for antislavery politics. It was divisive enough making a coalition decision based on bargaining, but presumably one had something to show for the effort at the end of the day. And ideological affinity was not predictable: some Free Soilers had a soft spot for their former party, and some had a deep resentment of it based upon their mutual rejection. This was clearly the case with Salmon Chase and Gamaliel Bailey in regard to the Whigs.

The Free Soilers could agree to join a coalition with whoever gave them the best deal. Presumably, this would be with the smaller, weaker party in a particular state, which would use the support of the Free Soilers to come to power or at least win key elections. But both the old parties had a vested interest in seeing the destruction of the new party. The Whigs had this interest because the Free Soilers were competing with them for the allegiance of antislavery voters. For the Democrats, this interest was because they were a proslavery party and the Free Soilers were threatening the stability of the party by supporting such measures as the Wilmot Proviso.

This meant that logically it would be better to remain apart. But what had the Liberty Party got from this? Alone, the Free Soilers had no hope of patronage to distribute nor could they win important committee assignments in Congress on committees dealing with territorial affairs. And if they wanted a shot at the national upper house, the Senate, they would have to cooperate in order to win power back. The stakes were highest in the five states where the Free Soilers did best: New York, Massachusetts and Vermont in the Northeast, and Ohio and Wisconsin in the Northwest/Midwest. Nationally the Free Soilers held the balance of power in the 31st Congress between 112 Democrats and 105 Whigs in the House. The former Conscience Whigs refused to support the Whig candidate for speaker, Robert Winthrop of Massachusetts—a leading Cotton Whig, even though he was on record as supporting the Proviso. Winthrop was also opposed by a few Southern Whigs. As a result of their lack of support, the Southern candidate, Democrat Howell Cobb of Georgia was elected. It was a repetition of the 1844 election—the third party could demonstrate its power only in a fashion that impacted negatively on its own cause.¹

One person to play a major role in these discussions and debates was Gamaliel Bailey, who, permanently located in Washington, in the South, was not a member of any Free Soil Party. But he served as a leading editor for the new movement and as the host in Washington for weekend entertainment and discussions of the Free Soil caucus. All of the Free Soil congressmen were boarders who held their weekly caucus sessions on a rotating basis in the various boarding houses that they stayed at. So eventually Bailey encouraged them to meet at his home where various guests from the antislavery movement such as Lewis Tappan, John Whittier (Bailey's reporter), Charles Adams, and Chase could be brought to join in the discussion when they happened to be visiting Washington. In the 1851 spring session, Bailey formalized the arrangement with an invitation to all Free Soil members of Congress to his home for a "talk and a cup of coffee . . . every Saturday night of the session." Members of the other two parties with free soil sympathies such as Senator William Seward, Justice McLean, Rep. Ben Wade, Reps. Thaddeus Stevens and Horace Greeley from the Whigs, and Senator Thomas Hart Benton were invited.²

Until 1850 the Free Soil caucus met at Mrs. Sprigg's boarding house where Giddings, the senior member of the caucus, boarded. There was a new Whig congressman from Illinois boarding there as well—Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln did not get along very well with Giddings, whom he regarded as too radical for an orthodox party man like himself. Lincoln spent most of the first session of his single congressional term attempting to avoid controversy so that he could see Taylor elected president. He did not take part in the debates on the Wilmot Proviso so as not to antagonize Southerners, but voted for it on every occasion that the opportunity arose.³

Bailey supported the Barnburners in opposing Giddings's bill to abolish the slave trade in the District of Columbia. A bill to abolish the slave trade in the District of Columbia introduced by free soil Whig Daniel Gott of New York

did pass its first reading on a 99-88 vote, largely because many of the Southerners were absent from the chamber. But the bill was soon reconsidered after Southern threats and was defeated.

Lincoln stood up to introduce an alternative bill for gradual abolition of the slave trade on January 10, 1849, with compensation. He had consulted with a number of people on his proposal including Free Soilers Giddings and Horace Mann of Massachusetts as well as the conservative Whig mayor of Washington, William Seaton. But Lincoln found that once he spoke in support of his measure in the House, the support for it vanished, as many Northerners thought that it was too conservative—paying compensation would grant legitimacy to slavery—and Southerners thought it was too radical. Lincoln never formally introduced his proposal as a bill.⁴

Other than the parties in Massachusetts, New York, and Ohio, the Free Soil parties were almost forced to form coalitions or remain less effective than the state Liberty parties before them. The Wisconsin Free Soilers began in January 1849 by convening to reaffirm the Buffalo platform. They announced that they were ready to cooperate or merge with any party or individuals that accepted their platform. A Democrat attending the convention announced that the Democrats were ready to merge. The Democrats had neatly outmaneuvered the third party by giving them the choice of merging on Democratic terms or staying independent and appearing to be hypocrites. The Free Soil Party in Wisconsin splintered, as many joined the Democrats, some joined the Whigs, and others simply sat the election out. The party was in tatters by the end of the year. In 1850, the party formed a coalition with the Whigs and managed to reelect Charles Durkee to Congress. The following year the Free Soilers decided to remain independent.⁵

In Michigan the Free Soilers entered into an alliance with the Whigs. A small “corporal’s guard” of Liberty men maintained an independent existence while the bulk of the party was eaten by the Whigs. The Free Soilers made no independent nominations in 1850. In Indiana the party remained independent but most of its voters and members quickly rejoined the traditional parties, which were both antiextensionist in the Hoosier State. In Illinois the Free Soil Party had basically disappeared by the time of the 1850 election. In Iowa the Free Soilers formed a coalition with the Whigs. Disillusioned with the experience, the Free Soilers—mostly former Liberty men—retained their independence. They became the only Free Soil Party in the country to receive more votes in 1852 than in 1848.⁶

In Vermont the Free Soilers had finished ahead of the Democrats. The two parties decided to merge on the basis of a thorough antislavery program with a ticket composed of candidates from both parties for the next election. The party adopted the name of Free Democracy that was eventually adopted by the Free Soil Party on a national basis in 1852. The Free Democrats increased their vote in 1849 and forced the gubernatorial election into the legislature. But in 1850 and 1851, the vote decreased as many Democrats defected to the Hunker Democratic faction. This continued in 1851 despite adding traditional Democratic economic

planks to its platform that year. But by 1851, they could boast that they were the “only integral party on a free soil platform” after the Massachusetts Free Soilers entered into a coalition in 1850.⁷

The policy of coalition from the New Hampshire Alliance continued in that state. Amos Tuck and a free soil Whig were twice returned to Congress. In Connecticut, Free Soilers joined with Democrats to send three antislavery candidates to Congress in 1849. In Maine, Free Soilers combined with Democrats to keep antislavery Hannibal Hamlin, Lincoln’s future vice president, and, with the Whigs, to send Isaac Reed to Congress.⁸

The new party faced another key challenge: they were out of sync with public political opinion. In 1849 and 1850, both the new Taylor administration and Congress were involved in a mighty effort to effect a sectional compromise that would both deal with the territorial question left over from the Mexican War and end the sectional tensions. There were three separate pressures that affected this effort. First, was the mutual rivalry and jealousy between Clay, the long-term Senate leader of the Whigs, and President Zachary Taylor for control of the party. The Whigs believed in legislative supremacy and Clay had first dominated Harrison and then written Tyler out of the party. Now, after having lost five separate bids at the White House, he faced a novice president who easily captured it on his first try. Second, were threats by Southern nationalists to secede if they did not get their way. Third, there was countervailing pressure from the Free Soilers. After an examination of the Compromise of 1850, this chapter looks at the situation of the Free Soilers in the same three states that we examined for the Liberty Party: New York, Massachusetts, and Ohio.

THE COMPROMISE OF 1850 AND THE FREE SOILERS

The debate that preceded the Compromise of 1850 and the crisis in 1849–50, was the first major national discussion of slavery and the territories since the Missouri crisis of 1818–21. Although there had been discussions during the debates on the Mexican War, this was the first attempt by both parties to craft an intersectional compromise.

Taylor began with a move to grant immediate statehood to California as a free state after a convention in Monterey met and wrote a constitution in 1849. Taylor wanted to create two new states out of the Mexican Cession: California and New Mexico. He sent emissaries to Santa Fe and Monterey (the then capital) urging the residents to write constitutions and apply for statehood. He sent a third emissary to Salt Lake City and urged the Mormons to apply for inclusion within California by sending delegates to the constitutional convention in Monterey. This way, all of the territory would be free of congressional interference and the Proviso. Residents of New Mexico petitioned Congress to create a territorial government for them. By the time the Mormon delegates reached Monterey the constitutional convention had already concluded its business and had claimed the

Sierra Madre range for its eastern border, thus leaving the Mormons in limbo. Taylor called on Congress to admit California as a free state immediately, and New Mexico whenever it was ready.⁹

Taylor wrote in his first State of the Union message to Congress at the end of 1849: "I again submit to your wisdom the policy recommended in my annual message of awaiting the salutary operations of these causes, believing that we shall thus avoid the creation of geographical parties and secure the harmony of feeling so necessary to the beneficial action of our political system."¹⁰ The Free Soilers did not appreciate this attack on their party. They insisted on organizing territorial governments in the Cession with explicit prohibition of slavery and outlawing slavery in the District of Columbia. Northern Whigs wanted to impose the Proviso as a means of survival against further inroads by the Free Soilers. Southern Democrats used their control over patronage in an attempt to prevent Northern Whigs from enacting the Proviso. Southern Whigs were convinced that their Northern colleagues were out of touch with public sentiment on slavery in the South. Northern Whigs supported Taylor's plan, but lacked the votes to pass it. The debate was lining up with a sectional, rather than a partisan division—but with partisan differences within each section.¹¹

Clay, after meeting with Webster in his Washington home in order to fashion a Whig approach to the crisis that both sections could support, presented his eight proposals to the Senate on January 28, 1850. The separate measures, which were all part of one omnibus bill, were designed to give something to both sections. First, California was to be admitted as a free state and New Mexico was to be organized on the basis of popular sovereignty. Next, Clay set Texas's border with the Mexican Cession at its present border with New Mexico and, in compensation to Texas, had the federal government assume Texas's debt from its days as a republic. He then abolished the slave trade—or at least further restricted it—in the District of Columbia and linked the termination of slavery itself in the district with its status in Maryland. He then proposed a new fugitive slavery act that would further empower the South to retrieve its slaves. Clay argued that Mexican laws outlawing slavery were still in effect in the Cession as no positive legislation had been passed to counter them. Webster argued that climate would keep slavery out of the Southwest. The issue became so heated during the debate that Senator Henry Foote of Mississippi drew a pistol on Benton during the debate. This was an ominous foreshadowing of worse to come during the decade. This was the last major Senate debate for the triumvirate of anti-Jackson senators—John Calhoun, Henry Clay, Daniel Webster—who had formed the Whig Party in 1834. Calhoun had defected back to the Democrats from the Whigs in 1837, but remained more of an independent than a party Democrat during the 1840s. Clay began the debate on February 5 with an overall presentation of his proposals. In the same month he was followed by major speeches by Sam Houston in support, Jefferson Davis demanding California as slave territory, and Jacob Miller of New Jersey for the administration in demanding that California be immediately admitted without any additional measures.¹²

In March, when it became Calhoun's turn to speak, he was too racked with fever and sickness to speak and gave his speech to Senator James Mason of Virginia who read it for him. His final speech, the "cords that bind" speech, was a warning that if all ties were dissolved between the sections only force would hold the Union together and then disunion would result. He listed the different cords that bound the two sections together: the churches, then in the course of splitting along regional lines, the parties, which would split during the next decade, and social. The speech had no bearing on the actual content of Clay's proposal, but did contribute to the compromise because of its solemn warning to the Senate.¹³

Webster spoke three days later and Calhoun made his final appearance in the Senate to hear Webster speak. Webster's speech was very influential because he had a reputation as a free soiler and his collusion with Clay was secret. Webster claimed that he spoke from a national, rather than a sectional or partisan perspective. He granted that the South had legitimate grievances as regards to fugitive slaves. And he supported the proposals. Many of the former Conscience Whigs were shocked by his words. Whittier wrote a famous poem, *Ichabod*, in answer to the speech, as an obituary for Webster, which was published in the *National Era*. Charles Sumner, after the speech, compared Webster to Judas and Benedict Arnold and he praised Horace Mann when Mann attacked Webster from the floor of the House.¹⁴

William Seward replied to Webster in his famous "Higher Law" speech on March 11. He claimed that there was a "higher law" that men had to answer to, than the Constitution. Seward, who was the senator closest to the Taylor administration, did not use his opportunity to defend Taylor's proposal but instead used it to attack Webster. The opportunity was wasted and both Seward and Taylor came to regret it. This was the speech that established Seward's reputation as a radical.¹⁵

At the end of March, Calhoun died. In April, Clay secured the appointment of a Select Committee of Thirteen to examine his proposals and all competing proposals. Clay hoped that by packaging the proposals together he could force the Senate and the House to pass them together as a package that would satisfy everyone. The committee went along with Clay and supported his measures rather than the administration's proposal. In May, Clay reported his bill to the Senate for consideration. But he could not help crowing about his victory over Taylor. On May 21, he openly challenged the administration and it responded.

On June 3, delegates from nine Southern states met in convention in Nashville and threatened the country with secession if the South was not satisfied. Five Southern states had delegates formally chosen by the state legislatures with four more chosen by party conventions and legislative caucuses. The convention met for nine days, passed a number of resolutions, and threatened to meet again if they were not satisfied with the actions of Congress. Giddings simply refused to take these threats seriously.¹⁶

This was compounded by Sam Houston making threats of Texas going to war with the United States. This was if the latter attempted to intervene in Texas's

border dispute with New Mexico by attempting to fix the border. So Taylor faced both possible secession and war. At this point, Taylor became violently ill and then suddenly died of gastroenteritis after eating raw cherries along with warm buttermilk during the Fourth of July celebrations. The abolitionist newspaper, the *Emancipator*, editorialized on Taylor's death that "[s]trange as it may seem, antislavery men have more reason to regret his [Taylor's] death than have any other class of men." For the second time in less than a decade, a Whig general died prematurely in the White House and was replaced with an untested civilian. In this case, the new president was Millard Fillmore, the leader of one faction, the Silver Grays, of the New York Whigs. Fillmore was just settling into his new role when Clay's omnibus measure came before the Senate for a vote. The measures for settling the Texas border and for establishing a territorial government in New Mexico were defeated. Only the granting of statehood to Utah remained and was passed. Both, the free soilers of all parties and the Southern nationalists were delighted. But the moderate centrists like Lewis Cass and Stephen Douglas for the Democrats and Robert Winthrop for the Whigs were troubled. Clay, exhausted after six months of effort to write and pass the measures, gave up and went on vacation. Douglas then took over the effort to pass Clay's package.¹⁷

Among antebellum historians, it is common to speak of an Age of Jackson. Michael Holt speaks of an Age of Lincoln, but does not define when it begins or ends.¹⁸ The earliest it could begin is somewhere in the summer or fall of 1858 during the Lincoln-Douglas debates. The logical point for it to end is with his assassination. This author would argue that much of the intervening period between the two should be thought of as the Age of Douglas, starting with Douglas taking over from Clay in organizing the passage of the Compromise of 1850 and ending in 1860 with the split in the Democratic Party. Douglas would be a key actor over the next decade at a number of critical points in this narrative: 1854, 1857, 1858, and 1860.

Fillmore appointed his own cabinet with Webster as secretary of state. He then came out in favor of the compromise proposals. He also used patronage to ensure that Northern Whigs went along with the administration. On August 6, Fillmore reported to Congress the threats of Texas to march on Santa Fe over the boundary dispute. Fillmore declared Santa Fe and the areas east of the Rio Grande to be part of New Mexico. The next day, a Maryland Whig introduced a bill that set Texas's western border at its modern location and compensated Texas \$5 million for its claims and another \$5 million was appropriated to pay off holders of Texas bonds. The bill passed the Senate 30-20 with the Free Soilers voting with twelve Southern Democrats in opposition.¹⁹

Douglas was shrewd enough to realize that there was no overall national majority in Congress in favor of Clay's omnibus proposal. So Douglas broke Clay's proposal into a series of separate bills that would be passed by sectional majorities. There would be no overall package, but the contents of it would pass. Northern majorities opposed the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 and the organization of New Mexico and Utah territories without the Proviso. The votes took place

from July 31 to September 16 in the Senate, and from September 6–17 in the House. The Free Soil Party voted in favor of California statehood and the District of Columbia restrictions on the slave trade, and in opposition to Utah organization, the Texas debt, New Mexico organization, and the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. Four of the members of the party did not vote on the final measure on the District of Columbia. Wilmot was back in Pennsylvania trying to save his seat. But the other three are not accounted for. Historian David M. Potter wrote that “it must be said that North and South did not consent to each other’s terms, and that there really was no compromise—a truce perhaps . . . certainly a settlement, but not a true compromise.” Chase agreed, he said that “the question of slavery in the territories has been avoided. It has not been settled.”²⁰

The Compromise of 1850 was popular not because of the specifics of any of its proposals, but because it brought an end to antislavery agitation and brought intersectional peace after four years of agitation. It had resulted in the “slave line” moving north in the West from 36 degrees 30 minutes to 42 degrees in Utah. Whigs and Democrats in the North ran against the Fugitive Slave Act, which they had voted against, during the elections of 1850 from Boston to the Western Reserve to Wisconsin. The Free Soil caucus was gutted in the elections of 1850 and reduced to four members of the House: Giddings, Charles Durkee from Wisconsin, George Julian from Indiana, and Charles Allen from Massachusetts, with Amos Tuck reelected as a Democrat in New Hampshire. When Giddings returned to Washington in December 1850 for the new session of Congress, he got together with his fellow Free Soilers and rented a house in Washington.²¹

Without a territorial debate as in 1846 and 1848, many Free Soil voters simply decided that the issue was concluded and either stayed home in 1850 or returned to their previous parties. By 1851, coalitions had done their work and the Free Soil Party in the Midwest was reduced to Ohio’s Western Reserve, southeastern Wisconsin, and a weak presence in Iowa. It still remained strong in Massachusetts where, in the spring of 1851, Charles Sumner was elected by a Democratic-Free Soil coalition to join Hale and Chase. The Free Soilers now had nearly as many members in the upper house as in the lower house.

Free Soilers and abolitionists tried to keep the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 alive as an issue, by organizing against every attempted rendition of a fugitive slave in the North. But by the mid-autumn of 1851 this had disappeared as a major issue as well.²² The law was very unpopular as it made ordinary Northerners accomplices in slavery by making them legally responsible to render aid to recapture fugitive slaves. But in fact, in most places in the North, law enforcement quietly cooperated with the law. Records show that only about three hundred fugitive slaves were renditioned to the South between 1850 and secession a decade later. This amounts to about two slaves per slave state per year.²³

Historian David Potter concluded that in retrospect the Compromise was fatal to the cause of the South as it delayed secession for a decade and made the industrial and demographic gap between the two sectors grow all that much wider. Michael Holt argued that the Compromise benefited the North because

the federal treasury became responsible for paying Northern bondholders of Texas bonds.²⁴ In 1848, Whigs had won 82 out of 143 House races or 57.3 percent, whereas in 1850 they elected only 57 out of 135 congressmen or only 42.2 percent.²⁵ The Whigs were starting to experience the collapse in the South that would be so dramatic two years later.

But whereas both the Democrats and Whigs added new voters in 1852, the Free Soilers lost them. Both the main parties supported the Compromise in their platforms, whereas the Free Soilers specifically condemned it at length. But the biggest political effect it had was in the Whig Party. Antislavery Whigs became determined to block the nomination of either Webster or Fillmore, leaving McLean and Scott as the only available candidates.²⁶

THE 1852 CAMPAIGN

In the spring of 1852, many Free Soilers were prepared to support either the Democratic or Whig nominee based upon their personal inclinations. By luck, Bailey's public hopes as expressed in the pages of the *National Era* proved more accurate than his private fears. Bailey and Charles Adams agreed that an independent nomination would be pointless if the Democrats nominated someone that most Free Soilers would support and if the Whigs nominated Scott and the Conscience Whigs acquiesced. Adams was himself leaning toward supporting Scott, as his future patron William Seward did, and Chase had already supported the Democratic gubernatorial candidate over Free Soiler Sam Lewis in the 1851 election. This basically signaled the end of the Cincinnati clique as an organized group. So the Free Soilers would have to await the outcome of the Democratic and Whig conventions before deciding how to act. On June 24, Bailey announced in Sam Lewis's name that the Free Democratic national convention would be at Pittsburgh on August 11.²⁷

The Whig race for the nomination had basically come down to a race between General Winfield Scott, the hero of the Mexican War and President Millard Fillmore. Fillmore was the candidate of the South, which for the first time in Whig history lacked a sectional candidate of its own. In the spring of 1852, Henry Clay was on his deathbed and would be too sick to even attend the Whig convention. But he continued his rivalry with Webster by sending a public letter to a New York newspaper endorsing Fillmore for the nomination. Webster, although in poor health caused by a lifetime of heavy drinking, was determined to have a last go at the presidency and he had support in several New England states. The only one of this trio acceptable to the Free Soilers was Scott. Webster was acceptable to the South, although it preferred Fillmore.²⁸

William Seward, the New York senator and Clay's natural successor as leader of the Whigs, was functioning as Scott's chief manager in 1852. Seward did not want to invent antislavery bona fides for Scott in order to appease the Free Soilers and thereby risk alienating the Silver Grays. By June, Giddings and other

Free Soilers were denouncing Seward for betraying his antislavery background and appeasing the South.²⁹

When the Democrats met at Baltimore in May 1852 for their national convention there were three serious candidates: Lewis Cass of Michigan, the 1848 nominee who wanted a chance to improve his political reputation by winning the presidency; Stephen Douglas of Illinois, the young dynamic Western politician who had crafted the Compromise of 1850; and James Buchanan of Pennsylvania, a professional diplomat who had served as Polk's secretary of state. The South did not have a major candidate of its own in 1848. It was backing Buchanan for his faithful service to Polk. Douglas was blocked by the "old fogies" of the party establishment who objected to his implied attacks on the establishment and his lifestyle. After 49 ballots, no single candidate could win a majority, let alone the two-thirds needed to nominate under Democratic rules. So a group of Mexican War veterans within the party promoted the dark horse candidacy of Franklin Pierce of New Hampshire who had served as a brigadier general under Scott in Mexico during 1847. Nominating a general of their own would help to counteract Scott if he became the Whig nominee, and Pierce was quite handsome and had a reputation of being sympathetic to the South. Pierce won the nomination with a platform endorsing the finality of the Compromise. Pierce proved to be quite acceptable to the Barnburners, who had returned to the New York Democratic Party in 1850, as Cass would not have been.³⁰

The following month, the Whig convention was even longer than the Democratic convention had been and would prove to be the longest in Whig history. The first important item of business was the platform. The Whigs also came out for finality on the Compromise, but like the Democrats they did not use that term. The platform specifically endorsed the "strict enforcement" of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 and condemned any further antislavery agitation. Its tariff plank, written by the South, made a mockery of past Whig protectionist policy and Clay's "American System."³¹

A slight movement away from Webster began and on the 52nd ballot Scott was within a single vote of a majority. On the 53rd and final ballot Scott emerged victorious with 157 votes to 114 for Fillmore and 21 for Webster. Had Webster only given in earlier he could have had the nomination for Fillmore, whom he respected as opposed to Scott whom he despised. But Webster was a very vain and stubborn man. William Graham of North Carolina was chosen as Scott's running mate. All the serious contenders for the bottom slot on the ticket were Southerners. Eight days after the convention ended, on June 29, Henry Clay finally died.³²

The Free Soilers had enough resentment from the two conventions to make an independent nomination worthwhile. Adams wrote to Sumner, "We have nothing left us but to make up the issue with both branches of the slave party. Whether few or many, an independent organization is our only resource." Even Chase considered a separate nomination to be essential.³³

Since 1848, Bailey had considered Justice John McLean, a Whig failure for the nomination, Senator Thomas Hart Benton, and Cassius M. Clay as possible candidates, who, like Van Buren in 1848, might attract widespread support. But Bailey had become disillusioned with McLean. Benton as a slaveholder would have been impossible for Liberty men, the core of the party by 1852, to support. And Clay, who had fought a nearly fatal brawl with a bowie knife in 1849, was considered to be too violent to be acceptable to either most Liberty men or Whigs. Others floated different names, nearly all of them Democrats. The dearth of Whigs suggests that many believed that it would be easier to strip Free Soilers from the Democrats with Pierce as the nominee, than from the Whigs with Scott as the nominee.³⁴

Bailey believed that the Free Soilers should nominate a Democrat on a Democratic platform in order to split the Democratic vote and help elect Scott. So Chase, who did not want to run himself, wrote an editorial in the *National Era* proposing Hale as the ideal nominee, while disavowing any strategy to help elect Scott. This editorial was written while Bailey was on vacation and he disavowed it in the following issue.³⁵

A week before the scheduled convention, Hale derailed the free-soil train by refusing to become a candidate. Hale promised to back whomever was nominated but pleaded personal circumstances for his decision not to run. Other candidates lacked prominence, were already better placed in Congress to aid the cause (Giddings), or had no desire for the nomination. Austin Willey, a Free Soil editor from Maine was appointed to approach Hale and urge him to reconsider. Chase quashed Hale's letter of refusal and urged his colleague to accept the nomination if it were offered. Chase was probably afraid that if he did not persuade his colleague in the Senate, his fellow Free Soilers—including his good friend Bailey—would be pressuring him to accept the nomination.³⁶

Leaders from Massachusetts and Ohio, the two most active Free Soil parties, dominated the delegates, representing some 2,000 who attended the convention, compared with ten-fold that number four years ago. All those who had attended the Buffalo convention were welcome to attend. Frederick Douglass, who attended as a delegate from New York, was not only welcomed but elected secretary of the convention. The platform committee included Willey, Giddings, Adams, and Gerrit Smith, who felt no embarrassment at writing the platform of one party while functioning as the leader of another.³⁷ The platform was a repeat of the Buffalo platform along with a clause condemning slavery in Biblical terms that sounded like it came straight out of a Liberty platform, and a plank calling for the diplomatic recognition of Haiti. It also reflected Democratic economic principles. Its most notable difference from Buffalo was an anticoalition resolution that declared that the Free Democrats were “not organized to aid either the Whig or Democratic wing of the great Slave Compromise party of the nation, but to defeat them both.” The convention officially changed the name of the party to Free Democrats—a name that some members had been using since 1848. Smith and Goodell refused to support the ticket.³⁸

Hale, to no one's surprise, was chosen as the presidential nominee on the first ballot with 192 out of 208 votes cast. The vice-presidential nomination was more complicated, with former Congressman George Julian being chosen over Sam Lewis of Ohio on the second ballot, with the backing of both Henry Wilson and Chase. Before the convention, Lewis had been the only person prominently mentioned for the second slot. Lewis had no hostility toward Julian, but blamed his defeat on Chase. This was further evidence of the collapse of the Cincinnati clique.³⁹

The second party convention had been both spirited and harmonious—a difficult combination in politics. But unlike in 1848, the hopes for the election were much more realistic in 1852. No one expected to carry even a single state—as opposed to the several it expected to carry in 1848. Failure had sobered up the party.⁴⁰

The main difference between the Free Democrats and Smith's Liberty Party was over black rights in the North. Although Chase had let the fight to repeal black laws in Ohio, many blacks still distrusted the Free Democrats because they did not openly advocate equality for blacks in most of the North. Many blacks, particularly in New York, continued to support Smith's tiny Liberty Party, which nominated William Goodell in 1852. This was especially after Douglass came out in support of Goodell. But with blacks unable to vote outside of New England and New York, and in the latter on a restricted franchise, it was easy for the Free Democrats to risk losing a few black votes rather than risk losing many more white votes throughout the North.⁴¹

The two main parties did an even better job of ignoring the Free Democrats in 1852 than they had done of ignoring the Free Soilers in 1848. Hale, after playing Hamlet for nearly a month, finally consented to accept the nomination in September after several Free Democrat leaders wrote to him imploring him to accept. Hale and Julian campaigned strenuously and enthusiastically throughout the North, probably in the belief that a good show in November would help to reinvigorate the party. The pair went on a campaign tour through the Midwest. Because of the strong showing of the party in Wisconsin in 1848, particular importance was placed on this state with Hale speaking in six Wisconsin cities and Julian in four. Julian showed courage by campaigning in Kentucky at the invitation of Cassius Clay. Hale attempted to only campaign where damage to Pierce would outweigh damage to Scott. As one Massachusetts Free Democrat put it, "or rather, I *endeavor* to avoid all but Democratic towns." Outside of New York, the party slipped only two percent from its showing in 1848. Chase officially returned to the party in September and supported it by campaigning for Hale, but was treated with suspicion by many Free Democrats in Ohio. Neither Chase nor Sumner did a great deal for the party outside of the Senate in 1852.⁴²

Only twelve days before his death in late October, Webster sent a defiant letter to his closest New York supporters rejecting their pleas that he renounce independent efforts in his name. Webster despised Scott and did not care if he lost

the election for him and his party. So, potentially there were two separate campaigns that could draw significant numbers of votes away from the Whigs: Hale's Free Democrats and Webster's independent candidacy. Only Webster's death prevented this. As if this was not bad enough, Scott's managers conspired to have him campaign without violating political tradition by taking advantage of his position in the army. He appeared in a number of veterans functions. Scott had decided to go after the immigrant vote, but he did it in such a clumsy fashion that he managed to alienate large portions of his Protestant base without attracting significant numbers of immigrants away from the Democrats.⁴³

In the Deep South, large number of Whig voters stayed home from the polls on election day and Scott received only 35 percent of the popular vote. Scott actually polled better in the upper South than in the North. Scott attracted a record number of Whig votes, but Pierce also attracted a record number of votes for his party. In terms of electoral votes, it was a disaster for the Whigs: Scott carried only four states (Massachusetts, Vermont, Kentucky, Tennessee) for 42 votes to 254 for Pierce. In electoral terms it was the most lopsided election in the antebellum period. The popular vote was much closer: 1,601,474 (50.9 percent) for Pierce, 1,386,580 (44.0 percent) for Scott, and 156,667 (5.1 percent) for Hale.⁴⁴

Both the Free Democrats and the Whigs had to regroup, analyze the results, and decide what to do. For both parties, the 1852 election was also disastrous in terms of Congress: the Free Democrats won only three seats; Giddings and Edward Wade in the Western Reserve of Ohio and Gerrit Smith in New York. Smith ran as an independent and received support from Liberty men, Free Soilers, and free traders. The Whig Party's caucus in the South was dramatically reduced by a net loss of seventeen congressional seats—Whig candidates won less than a third of all contested elections—and the Democrats became the dominant party in the South, a situation that would last until the 1960s. The Whigs also lost nine of twelve gubernatorial races.⁴⁵

The Free Democrats were a force in only four states: Massachusetts (21.8 percent), Vermont (19.7 percent), New Hampshire (12.7 percent), and Wisconsin (13.7 percent). In Ohio the Free Democrats polled just a hair under nine percent of the vote. In New York the Free Democrats polled 25,329 votes but this was only 4.9 percent of the popular vote. In absolute terms the only state that exceeded New York was Massachusetts with 28,023 votes.⁴⁶

The Free Democrats faced a fundamental problem: outside of the Western Reserve they could win congressional races and elections to the U.S. Senate only by forming coalitions with the two main parties, and these coalitions functioned only in midterm elections. Competition in presidential elections destroyed these coalitions. But ultimately, the future of the Free Democrats as a third party was dependent on the future of the main parties. But before getting to that it is necessary to review the history of the Free Soil Party in its three main states: New York, Massachusetts, and Ohio.

THE FREE SOIL PARTY IN NEW YORK 1849–50

Most prominent Barnburners were never comfortable as Free Soilers. They joined the movement in 1848 for the sake of redressing grievances within the Democratic Party and intended to return once this was accomplished or they felt that they had made their point. John Dix, the Free Soil candidate for governor of New York in 1848, entered the movement only at the insistence of Martin Van Buren, whom he respected. In New York the Barnburners were already part of the dominant party, something that those in Ohio and elsewhere could only aspire to. The Barnburners had no intention of merging with the Whigs at the state level.⁴⁷

By late 1849, the Barnburners were well on their way to reentering the state Democratic Party. In 1850, Martin Van Buren supported the Compromise that Douglas passed in the Senate. His son John and William Marcy, the leaders of the Barnburners, had similar views and this allowed them to easily reintegrate back into the party. Both were wary of the South but wanted a compromise on slavery. In March 1850, the two Democratic factions, the Barnburners and the Hunkers, agreed to meet in a joint convention at Syracuse in September. The convention passed a resolution supporting the Compromise of 1850 over the objections of John Van Buren. In an address to the convention, John Van Buren attempted to claim that their defection had never occurred. “I know no other party except [the Democrats], and never belonged to any other,” he claimed.⁴⁸

The Barnburners attempted to make acceptance of the Wilmot Proviso a condition for their return to the party in 1849. By the following year, the Proviso was forgotten, both due to the Compromise of 1850 and to a hunger for patronage and a return to power. At the convention in September 1850, the two factions reunited. This was decisively demonstrated in 1852 when both the Barnburners and Martin Van Buren loyally supported Pierce for president.⁴⁹

But the 1848 revolt was a crack in the Democratic structure. Six years later—four years after reunification—many of the younger Barnburners and the congressmen such as Preston King defected permanently from the Democratic Party and joined in fusion efforts to form the Republican Party.

As mentioned above, Gerrit Smith was elected on a low-tariff, free trade platform to Congress in the 1852 election. He was supported by a coalition of antislavery Whigs, Democrats, Free Democrats, and Liberty men. He was at first reluctant to accept the nomination, but he saw this as an opportunity to bring Bible politics to Congress. Smith reduced his “creed” of Bible politics to seven key items: 1) immediate abolition; 2) land redistribution; 3) a nonracial suffrage including female suffrage; 4) free trade; 5) abolition of war as a national policy; 6) severe restrictions on internal improvements; and 7) direct election of all public officials.

In his first session of Congress that began in December 1853, Smith made more speeches than any other congressman. He also hosted elaborate dinners for nearly every member of the House and many senators. His colleagues regarded Smith as an eccentric and a bit of a fool. Halfway through his term,

Smith resigned his seat out of frustration at his lack of power and the culture in Congress. His main role was probably in signing Chase's famous "Appeal of the Independent Democrats to the People of the United States" that was written in January 1854 and that Smith had a hand in writing.⁵⁰

THE MASSACHUSETTS FREE SOIL PARTY 1849–54

The leadership of the Massachusetts Free Soilers, mostly former Conscience Whigs, was divided about the future course of the party. Vice-presidential nominee Charles F. Adams, former Congressman John Palfrey, and author Richard H. Dana wanted to keep the party independent of the two main parties. Horace Mann argued for a coalition with the Whigs as the voices of such influential Conscience Whigs as Charles Sumner, Palfrey, and S.C. Phillips would be greater within their former party than without. But because some 45 percent of Free Soil voters in the state in 1848 were former Democrats, several Free Soilers including Amasa Walker, Henry Wilson, and Francis Bird argued for a coalition with the Democrats. Their argument was expressed in terms of bargaining and balance-of-power politics as well as ideology.⁵¹

At the Massachusetts Free Soil convention in September 1849, a platform, written by Sumner, was passed with the skillful aid of Henry Wilson. The platform combined antislavery with Democratic-oriented reform measures such as cheap postage, economy in government, free homesteads, popular election of all civil officials, and river and harbor improvements. The convention passed them all. This was the sort of platform advocated by the Liberty Leaguers in New York and Elizur Wright in Boston.⁵²

The following year, Webster's support of the Compromise ended any discussion of a coalition with the Whigs. The fight was now between Adams and Wilson over independence or coalition with the Democrats. "To join with them . . . merely for the sake of the bait of a Senator's place to one of us strikes me as a renunciation of all moral character which will ultimately lead to our annihilation as a party."⁵³

At the annual Free Soil convention in October 1850, Adams was able to prevent a formal alliance, but individual members were left free to negotiate their own deals. After the state election of 1850, Wilson began negotiating a deal with leading Democrats, notably George Boutwell and Nathaniel Banks. By the end of the first week of the new legislature a deal had been negotiated. The Free Soilers would back Boutwell for governor along with the Democratic candidates for lieutenant governor, speaker of the house, and a majority of the council seats. In turn, the Democrats would back the Free Soilers for the U.S. Senate seat, the presidency of the state senate, and the remaining seats on the governor's council.⁵⁴

The Free Soilers upheld their end of the bargain. On January 7, 1851, the Free Soil legislators nominated Sumner for the Senate and all but six of the Democrats supported Sumner. The state senate supported Sumner for the

position, but a revolt began among Democrats in the state house. The Democratic opponents blocked Sumner's election on ballot after ballot through the winter and spring of 1851. Wilson, who was now president of the state senate, began a personal lobbying campaign within the legislature to scrape together the necessary votes to get Sumner elected. Finally on August 25, 1851, a majority was achieved, largely because Free Soilers in retaliation keep pet legislative projects of Democrats from passing.

In Washington, Chase was overjoyed. "Now I feel as if I have a brother colleague—one with whom I shall sympathize and be able fully to act," wrote Chase to Sumner even before his election. Chase did not have a high regard or close personal friendship with John Hale. Now he finally had a party colleague in the Senate who shared his pragmatism and moralism in similar quantities, as well as his elitist background and Democratic orientation.⁵⁵

During 1851, the alliance between the Democrats and the Free Soilers showed few gains for the latter. The Free Soilers attempted to pass a new personal liberty law to guarantee alleged fugitive slaves a jury trial and were denied this by the Democrats. The Democrats also refused to condemn the Fugitive Slave Act. At the Democratic state convention in August, the Hunker faction won a resolution supporting the Compromise of 1850.

Wilson wanted to use the Democrat-Free Soil coalition in Massachusetts as a model for a national coalition between the two parties in 1852. He even suggested that such a coalition should back Lewis Cass for president. Wilson was chosen as president of the Free Democrats convention in Pittsburgh in August 1852. Just about this time the Massachusetts coalition began collapsing as Free Soilers and Democrats returned to their former allegiances. "These are dark days for us and for our cause," Wilson wrote in despair to Sumner after the Whigs had returned to power in Massachusetts in the state election.⁵⁶

The strong performance of the Free Soil Party in Massachusetts in November demonstrated that it remained alive and vital. But it was dependent upon public opinion, which in turn fluctuated with events. And it was dependent upon unity. Adams dropped out of politics in 1851, over the coalition. He then returned in 1852 for the presidential campaign.⁵⁷

Wilson used the state constitutional convention of 1853 as a chance to reinvigorate the party. Wilson and Boutwell, the former coalition governor, were the most influential delegates at the convention. Wilson had several committee chairmanships and Boutwell served as president of the convention. Because of the many divisions within the coalition, Wilson was forced to continually compromise. One member described Wilson's role as "a manager and contriver of expedients and a feeler of the public pulse." Wilson's political philosophy was that "half a loaf is better than no bread." The new constitution gave more power to the smaller cities and towns at the expense of the Whig-dominated eastern half of the state.⁵⁸

Wilson received the Free Soil nomination for governor on September 16, 1853. Three weeks before the election, Wilson's Free Soil opponent John Palfrey

published an open letter condemning the constitution. This was followed by Charles Adams and E. Rockwood Hoar, another prominent Free Soiler, criticizing the draft constitution. In the fall election, the constitution was narrowly defeated and Wilson was badly beaten in the gubernatorial race. Whigs voted heavily against the constitution and Irish Catholics voted Whig because of a clause in the constitution withdrawing funding for parochial schools.

Adams then dropped out of politics for several years starting in October 1853 to devote himself to literary efforts and to managing the family estate. Wilson blamed his opponents within the party, namely the Adams-Palfrey faction, for his loss and the defeat of the constitution. Dana disliked Wilson as a professional politician, preferring citizen-politicians who would devote at best a couple of hours a day to politics. Wilson wrote a caustic letter to Bailey in the *National Era*, but Bailey refused to print the letter as he did not want to air the party's dirty linen in public. January 1854 found Wilson without a coalition and with a party broken up into rival factions.⁵⁹

THE FREE SOIL PARTY IN OHIO, 1849–54

The most successful districts in the country for the Free Soilers in the two presidential elections that the party contested were in western Massachusetts and the Western Reserve of Ohio. In 1849, Ohio experienced the same debate over coalitions that Massachusetts and other Free Soil parties had. The prime protagonists in Ohio were Joshua Giddings, a former Conscience Whig who had served continuously in Congress since 1839, and Salmon Chase—a former Whig and then Liberty man—who had engineered the creation of the Free Soil Party. Giddings wanted the party to stay independent in the state where the Democrats and Whigs were nearly evenly matched, unlike Massachusetts, where the Whigs dominated. Chase argued for coalition with the Democrats.

The Ohio Free Soil convention met in December 1848. Chase wrote the platform, as he had done for so many state Liberty conventions, and endorsed many Democratic principles on economic issues and other areas not related to slavery in order to prepare the ground for a coalition with the Democrats. Chase believed that a Free Soil-Democratic alliance in the North was the best way to contain slavery. But Giddings and many others, including Sam Lewis, saw Chase as self-promoting and opportunistic in seeking his own nomination to the Senate. But there was a certain logic in this: Giddings was already in Congress and would have to give up his seat in order to go to the Senate and Chase was the leading Free Soil organizer in Ohio. These were the only two serious candidates for the seat and only one could have it.

There was, as a result of the 1848 election, a complete deadlock in the state legislature between the Democrats and Whigs, with only eight Free Soil members in the house and three in the senate. But the Free Soilers held the balance-of-power. Chase arranged a deal for two independent Free Soilers to vote with the

Democrats to seat the Democratic representatives from Hamilton Co. in a redistricting dispute. This would give the Democrats control of the house. In turn, they agreed to elect Chase to the Senate and to repeal the state's black laws, which discriminated against the free black population of Ohio. The five Free Soil members, elected with the help of Whigs, voted for Giddings, but were betrayed by their Whig colleagues who voted for a Whig candidate. The black laws were repealed and Chase was elected to the Senate on the fourth ballot. The two Free Soil members supporting Chase reciprocated by voting for Democratic candidates for judgeships.

The coalition was deeply resented by both Whig-oriented Free Soilers and free-soil Whigs. The two Free Soil members of the legislature, Norton Townshend and John Morse, were ostracized by their colleagues in both the party and by the Whigs in the legislature. In order to keep the party from dividing and to prevent a formal merger between the two parties that he was convinced Chase was aiming at, Giddings arranged for a reconciliation convention in May 1849 at Cleveland attended by many Western Reserve Free Soilers. At this convention he called for a national Proviso convention for July in Cleveland. This latter convention was intended to restore the Free Soil Party as a national party and give it purpose and direction. But it was disappointing; many prominent Free Soilers were either absent or present only out of political calculation rather than conviction. Giddings went out of his way to ensure that there was no animosity between himself and Chase. He offered Chase the use of his room at Mrs. Sprigg's boarding house while Chase looked for lodgings in the capital following his election.⁶⁰

During the spring and summer of 1849, there was fusion taking place between Democrats and Free Soilers at the county level throughout Ohio. By the following year many of the former Democratic Free Soilers saw the Compromise as a good opportunity to return to their former party. By the spring of 1850, the Ohio Free Soil Party—which had renamed itself the Free Democracy in July 1849—anticipating the national name change by some three years, had merged with the Democrats everywhere but in Giddings's congressional district. As in 1848, the Whigs and Democrats united to oppose Giddings and again he emerged victorious. Sam Lewis running as the Free Democrat nominee for governor polled only a third as many votes as Van Buren had polled two years before. By the end of the year, the Free Soil Party was nearly dead in Ohio. The following year when Ohio's other Senate seat became open, the Free Soilers were unable to secure it for Giddings despite the efforts of Chase. Neither Whigs nor Democrats trusted Giddings and they preferred to elect Giddings's former law partner, Benjamin Wade, to the Senate. Wade despised Giddings with a passion and was not on speaking terms with his brother, Edward, a prominent Free Soiler, who was finally elected to Congress two years later. Ben Wade referred to Free Soilers as "broken down politicians" and "political hacks." Chase did not like Wade, and Giddings only tolerated him.⁶¹

Giddings, who was the leader of the party on the Western Reserve, was determined to revive the party before the presidential election the following year. In April 1851, Giddings called for a Free Soil convention at Ravenna on the Reserve for late June. Chase attended the convention, but all the resolutions that were passed were those favored by Giddings. In addition to Chase and Giddings, it was attended by Sam Lewis, the gubernatorial nominee; Edward Wade, Giddings's former Liberty Party opponent; and Townshend and Morse, the two Free Soil state legislators who had helped elect Chase to the Senate. Some two thousand people attended the convention and cheered when the band played a funeral dirge for Daniel Webster for his political death in the Senate in 1850. Two more conventions were called for August and September to make independent nominations for the state elections that year and to plan for the 1852 presidential election. In August, Giddings wrote to Chase, "Our objection to uniting with the Democrats is in truth that they have no principles."⁶²

Chase retaliated for his defeat at Ravenna by supporting the Democratic nominee, Reuben Wood, for governor against Free Soil nominee Sam Lewis. Chase wrote an open letter to the party via the *National Era* to explain his actions. Bailey, although he remained on close personal terms with Chase, welcomed his exit from the party and became a political ally of Giddings. At this point, many Free Soilers began to consider Chase a Democrat rather than a Free Soiler. Chase went on to join the Ohio Democratic Party but not the national party.

Giddings invited Lewis Tappan, William Goodell, and Gerrit Smith to the September 1851 Cleveland convention planned to organize for the 1852 elections. The Free Soil Party was quickly returning to its Liberty roots by supporting quasi-abolitionist stands under the influence of Giddings. Although Gerrit Smith stayed home, the presence of other prominent Eastern abolitionists brought credibility to the relaunch of the party. Delegates came from every state in the North except Massachusetts and New Hampshire. The convention was also attended by Free Democrat congressmen and by Cassius M. Clay.⁶³

Throughout the Midwest, the party was, in reality, the old Liberty Party of three years before, as many of its Whigs and Democrats had returned to their former parties. By 1851, in the Midwest, the party was the only viable in Ohio and Wisconsin. In Ohio, out of forty Free Soil newspapers from 1848 only seven remained in 1851 and in Wisconsin this figure was three out of eight. Throughout the winter of 1852, there was a revival of the party by the Liberty men in the entire Midwest.⁶⁴

At Pittsburgh in August 1852, most of those attending were from either Massachusetts or Ohio with the latter having the best-organized contingent. Chase did not attend as he pleaded that he was needed in Washington as long as the Senate remained in session. But he had already used his influence to block the nomination of Sam Lewis as vice-presidential nominee.⁶⁵

Giddings's congressional district was redistricted in 1852 and he had to run in Mahoning and Trumbull Counties. Mahoning was a solid Democrat county and Trumbull had been losing antislavery sentiment since 1848. Giddings

appealed to the country's leading Free Democrats to campaign for his reelection. A "Giddings Festival" was arranged for Painesville, Ohio two weeks before the election. Chase, Edward Wade, Edward Hamlin (a Free Democrat editor from Cleveland), and John Hale all attended and paid glowing tributes to Giddings. Letters of support were read from several former Conscience Whigs and Liberty men such as Gerrit Smith, Elizur Wright, Jr., William Jay, and Theodore Parker. Giddings lost Mahoning County to his united opposition opponent, but won enough votes in Trumbull County to have an overall plurality in the district as a whole. Edward Wade was also elected to Congress from Cleveland to the frustration of his older brother Ben.⁶⁶

Starting in 1852, Giddings began undergoing a religious conversion from his traditional evangelical Christianity to a more spiritualist perfectionist position that more closely resembled that of Gerrit Smith, William Goodell, and Garrison. As he became more of a theological perfectionist, Giddings began to move closer to the Garrisonians politically. This would, in time, put him on the outer fringe of both the Free Democrats and the Republican Party once this party was formed.⁶⁷

For Ohio, and the Midwest in general, 1853—the party's final year—was also its best year. The Midwest had lost fewer votes in 1852 compared with 1848 than the other two main regions; the Middle Atlantic States lost some 100,000 votes and New England lost some 20,000 compared to a loss of only 15,000 in the Midwest. Lewis, as the Free Democratic gubernatorial candidate in Ohio, won 50,000 votes or 18 percent of the vote and carried six counties, as compared to the Whig candidate who won only 30 percent of the vote. Lewis's total was a 60 percent increase in the vote for Hale the year before. Chase finally saw that converting individual members of the two main parties was a sounder strategy than coalition or fusion with either party.⁶⁸

In Ohio in 1853, as an outcome of the election results, the Whig press began calling for a merger between the Whigs and the Free Democrats. As the Whigs began to decline, the Free Democrats were threatening to replace them as the opposition party in both Ohio and Wisconsin. In Wisconsin the Whigs sent out feelers for a coalition ticket in 1853 and the Free Democrats agreed. This resulted in the two parties uniting behind E.D. Holton, a veteran Liberty man and Free Soiler. A rump group of Silver Gray Whigs ran their own candidate and the Germans voted heavily Democratic out of fear that the Free Democrats were pro-temperance. But despite these disadvantages and a late start, Holton ran a respectable second to the Democratic candidate and polled more than twice as many votes as any antislavery candidate in Wisconsin history.⁶⁹

As 1853 ended, the Free Democrats faced a basic choice about their future strategy. They could stay independent on the assumption that the political climate was ripening for an antislavery party and hope to replace the Whigs as the opposition party nationally, or at least in a few states like Ohio, Vermont, Wisconsin, and possibly Massachusetts. Or they could work toward forging a merger with Whigs in which both parties would form a new party with a new identity on the basis of antislavery and possibly Whig economic principles

as well. They could also continue an ad hoc policy of state by state coalitions from election to election. But this last policy had nearly destroyed the party when it was attempted in 1849–51. The real choices for a national party that could affect national policy were the first two: independence or fusion, for the second time since 1847. National events would soon clarify the choice even more for the Free Democrats.

The experience of South Africa, Northern Ireland, and Israel—the then frontier democracies—in the twentieth century suggests that in frontier democracies it takes a sustained vote over time of at least 10 percent in first-past-the-post franchise systems and five percent in proportional representation systems for a liberal party to be effective. Anything below this, the party will simply be ignored by the larger parties.⁷⁰ The evolution of the Free Soil Party to the Republican Party from 1848 to 1855 is an illustration of this rule.

Multiparty America: The Competition for Opposition Party, 1854–56

INTRODUCTION

In 1854, American politics were dramatically realigned as voters reacted to political corruption and patronage, the irrelevance of previous ideological divisions, and the Kansas-Nebraska Act—which meant the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, to reform political parties. The American political system did not really become a multiparty system until 1854. Up to two dozen tickets competed in some local areas with four parties emerging at the end of the year: the Republicans, the Know Nothings (soon to be the American Party), the Whigs, and the Democrats. During the next year, the first three parties competed to see which would emerge as the opposition party to the Democrats. In 1856, the five parties—the American Party had split into two separate parties—supported three separate presidential candidates. By 1857, these four parties were reduced to two and they remained so, until 1860 when the two again became four as the Democrats split and the Whigs were temporarily resurrected as the Constitutional Union Party. Thus, in the 1850s, for six years the United States had the only multiparty system in its history. Not a multiparty system as divided as that in Israel—more like the multiparty systems in Ireland, Northern Ireland, and Germany. The three opposition parties that were in competition to become the main opposition party to the Democrats were organized around three main issues: antislavery, nativism, and temperance. There was considerable overlap between the two new parties; most Republicans were to some extent nativists and most Americans in the North were to some extent antislavery. Who joined which party

was determined by their intensity of feeling on the two issues and to some extent on luck. The catalyst for the whole reorganization was the introduction of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in Congress in January 1854, and its passage in May.

THE KANSAS-NEBRASKA ACT

In 1853, Senator Stephan A. Douglas tried to get a bill passed in Congress to organize the Nebraska territory so that he could settle the territory through which the Pacific railroad would pass. But he was faced with opposition from Southerners who had their own route for a Pacific railroad. In order to win Southern support for the railroad, Douglas would have to give the South something it desired. Since the Mexican War, the South had been trying to win support in principle for the belief that slavery was national and that slaves could be brought anywhere in the country as property. In order to prevent his bill from being tabled, as it had been in 1853, Senator Douglas needed to satisfy the senior senator from Missouri, David Atchison. Atchison wanted slavery specifically allowed in the Nebraska territory that was to be organized. This was because Missouri slaveholders were afraid that their slaves would flee to free territory if it were nearby. Initially, Douglas introduced his bill in January 1854, which divided the territory into two territories, Kansas and Nebraska, with the provision that slavery or free soil would be up to the residents of the territory. But this was not good enough for the South, because as part of the Louisiana Purchase, territory lying north of 36 degrees 30 minutes, slavery was forbidden in the territory under the provision of the Missouri Compromise of 1820. So, when Douglas reintroduced his bill in February 1854 it called for the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. Otherwise the South would not support the bill and it would be tabled in committee never to reach the floor for a vote. Douglas was morally indifferent to slavery and so was quite willing to make the change. Douglas had not anticipated the furor that his bill would create and had contempt for those who took the slavery extension issue seriously.¹

In January 1854, when Douglas first introduced the bill, Salmon Chase crafted, with the help of Joshua Giddings, an *Appeal of the Independent Democrats in Congress to the People of the United States*, calling on the population of the North to organize against a conspiracy of the Slave Power to foist slavery on the North. Douglas was accused of making a bargain with the South that would deliver him the presidency in exchange for his role in opening up the West for slavery. The appeal was signed by Chase and Sumner in the Senate and by four congressmen, three Free Soilers, and an independent. Chase later claimed that the appeal was his greatest work. Chase and his cosigners mailed out on their frank up to half a million copies of the appeal. The appeal was printed in the January 24 edition of the *National Era* and then reprinted in newspapers all over the North. It directly led to the calling of a number of antislavery meetings in the North to resist the Kansas-Nebraska Act by either furthering greater cooperation between

existing parties or to form a new opposition party on the basis of fusion of old antislavery parties. It was the Northern clergy who took the lead in rallying public opinion against the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Such a party would be the Free Soil Party Mark II based on a fusion of free soil anti-Nebraska Democrats, Whigs, and Free Democrats.²

The Free Democrats were quite willing to sacrifice themselves as they had only a very limited party remaining, largely confined to Ohio, Massachusetts, Wisconsin, and Indiana. Fusion would give them a shot at taking over the new party if they were involved from the beginning in organizing it. In January 1855 Chase began urging antislavery leaders to organize as Independent Democrats rather than as Republicans because the latter did not “designate any characteristic principle we hold, or object we contend for.” Most lesser leaders were more realistic in regard to the future of the party.³

The appeal was crafted with separate arguments designed to appeal to Liberty men and abolitionists, to Free Soilers, and to Whigs. It was claimed that Clay, were he but alive, would never accept that the Compromise of 1850 had nullified the Missouri Compromise. This argument was persuasive as he was the principal architect of both. They claimed that the Founders had intended that slavery eventually perish through containment and used the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 as proof of this contention. It was an argument that in the years ahead would be repeated by many Republicans including Lincoln in his famous Cooper Union address of February 1860.⁴

But if Northerners were too slow to organize to prevent its passage, they reacted quite violently and vigorously after the fact. Across the North, meetings were called and held to organize a new antislavery party. The first such meeting to use the name Republican was held in a Congregational church in Ripon, Wisconsin on February 28, 1854. The Ripon meeting was six days after a meeting in Jackson that organized an anti-Nebraska ticket with both former Democrats and former Whigs on it. A feeling that “a sacred compact” had been broken caused the reaction to the new bill. Northerners saw the Compromise of 1850 as supplementing, rather than replacing, the Missouri Compromise. In addition, there was the sense that only four years after they were told that the Compromise of 1850 had been a final settlement, the Slave Power was reopening the issue in order to negotiate better terms for itself.⁵

The *National Era* began reproducing anti-Nebraska editorials from papers all over the North as soon as they appeared. One could see in them the basic themes that were used by the antislavery forces. First, a “solemn pact” was broken by the South—a pact of 34 years. Second, the reason given for breaking it was that of a deceitful lawyer and was not logical. Third, the North had to rally to resist the encroachment of the Slave Power (or Slavery as the *Tribune* called it without referring to the institution). Fourth, the Slave Power reserved for itself the right to decide when a settlement was final and when a settlement was to be observed. The *National Era* reported in its April 6 issue that the *Cincinnati Gazette* listed eighty German language papers opposed to the Nebraska bill and only eight in favor.

In the April 20 issue, the *National Era* laid out a program for a new antislavery party by answering the hypothetical question of the Slaveholder "What would you do?" It listed five items. The paper then laid out the difference between the Independent Democrats (Free Democrats) and the two main parties.⁶

On June 16, 1854, in an editorial in the *Tribune*, Horace Greeley named the new party. "We should not care much whether those thus united [against the extension of slavery] were designated 'Whig,' 'Free Democrat,' or something else; though we think some simple name like 'Republican' would more fitly designate those who had united to restore the Union to its true mission...." The term "Republican" had its origins in the name of Jefferson's old party, the Republican Party. The refusal of Seward and Weed to back this call in 1854 led Greeley to angrily breakup the partnership in a letter to Weed.⁷

Greeley, who had founded the *Tribune* in 1841—as a daily in April, followed by a weekly edition in September—was a rather eccentric progressive Whig, a transcendentalist follower of Ralph Waldo Emerson, and socialist. By 1848 he considered himself an equal member of the Whig triumvirate of Seward, Weed, and Greeley that ran the Seward faction of the New York Whig Party. Seward and Weed considered Greeley to be a useful—if somewhat erratic—supporter, but certainly not an equal partner. During the early days of the Republican Party, Greeley was as much motivated by his sudden animus toward Seward and need for revenge against him, as by anything else.⁸

On July 6, there was a mass meeting in Jackson, Michigan, attended by some 10,000 people that organized a Republican Party. This is normally considered to be the official birth of the Republican Party. This was the first organized Republican Party. This was followed by parties organized in four other states on the same day, July 13, a week after the Jackson convention.⁹

The Kansas-Nebraska Act, which split the existing Nebraska territory into two territories, repealed the Missouri Compromise's restrictions on slavery in the former Louisiana Territory passed by a vote of 113 to 100 on May 22. Not a single Northern Whig had voted for the measure and about half of the Northern Democrats had. Opponents of the bill complained that the Pierce administration had made it a test of party loyalty. The division was both sectional and partisan: Democrats tended to be for the bill and Whigs were against it, Southerners were for it and Northerners tended to be against it. The ambiguity concerned the attitudes of Northern Democrats. Southern Whigs were for the measure, but Northern Democrats were split. In the 1854 congressional election, the Democratic Party in the North was decimated losing seventy seats and going from 92 seats in the North to 22. They would recover somewhat during the next presidential election, but the recovery was temporary. The only question in 1854 was who would inherit the North from the Democrats?¹⁰

Stephen Douglas had not been a particular favorite of the South before Kansas-Nebraska, but the attacks on him by antislavery figures drove the South to embrace him. Kansas-Nebraska definitely made Douglas the leading Democrat in the country, but it left him as the representative of a minority wing of the party.

It was the South that used him. And the South was partly put up to this by, of all people, William H. Seward of New York who wanted a new issue that the Whigs could organize around. Seward figured that he could save the party in the North by giving it a *raison d'être*.¹¹

In the upper Midwest—Wisconsin and Michigan—the antislavery party was quickly organized under the name of Republicans and was relatively successful. In both Michigan and Wisconsin, the Democrats retained only a single seat from each state in Congress. Charles Durkee, the former Free Soil congressman from Wisconsin, was elected to the Senate as a Republican in the winter of 1855.¹²

In Ohio and Indiana the name People's Party was used. Elsewhere the terms "fusion party" and "anti-Nebraska party" were used. In Indiana fusion was on the same ideological basis as in Wisconsin. The People's Party received the support of most Whigs and Free Democrats and a few Democrats, but less than the number hoped for by the party leaders. Antagonism between Free Democrats and Whigs made a People's Party harder to organize in Ohio than in Indiana. As his Senate term was drawing to a close, Chase worked to form a Democratic-oriented fusion party rather than a Whig-oriented one. In February 1854, Ben Wade had finally broken with the Whigs over their inaction on Nebraska. To a close political associate he confided, "I go for the death of slavery whether the Union survives or not." The Whigs were afraid of radical views like those of Wade and Chase.¹³

There were a number of free soil fusion conventions in Ohio in 1854 starting with one in Columbus in mid-March. There was a large fusion convention in Columbus on July 13, 1854 that included men of all parties as well as representatives of the German community. Ohio newspapers distinguished between anti-Catholic sentiment, which they supported, and anti-immigrant sentiment, which they condemned. Anti-Catholicism appealed to both nativists and to German Protestant immigrants. In Ohio and elsewhere in the North, Democrats attempted to combat the fusion movement by simply ignoring Nebraska and identifying the fusion movement with Know Nothingism. This was the only way they could hold their base together and win immigrant votes. In both Ohio and Indiana the Know Nothings dominated the People's Party. The People's Party received the votes of about a third of traditional Democratic voters in Ohio in 1854.¹⁴

In Iowa, the Whig nominee for governor, James Grimes, managed to put together a winning coalition with support from Free Democrats, anti-Nebraska Democrats, Germans, and temperance advocates. The hardest state in the Midwest for the Republicans to organize during the 1850s was in Illinois. Neither Whigs nor anti-Nebraska Democrats were interested in fusion. The fusionists met in a convention in Springfield on October 5, 1854 and formed the Republican Party. The "party" existed only on paper. It would take until early 1856 before the Republican Party was organized in Illinois.¹⁵

The Republican Party was successful in emerging as the main opposition party west of the Ohio-Pennsylvania border in 1854. In this region, state Whig parties were relatively weak and the nativists were not a major political factor

because they were slower organizing than in the East, where they had the benefit of two decades of various nativist parties proceeding them. East of that line, the emergence of the party was delayed for up to eighteen months by the organization of the nativist Know Nothings in the Northeast.

In the lower North—Illinois, Indiana, Pennsylvania, and New York—the Whigs held on to see who would emerge victorious. Many Whigs wished to remain with the old party as long as it appeared capable of providing a successful opposition to the Democrats. Seward and Weed initially saw the Nebraska issue as a chance to revive the Whig Party in the North. They expected the Free Democrats and free-soil Democrats to fall in behind their leadership. They then jumped to either the Republicans or the Americans when their party appeared no longer capable of fulfilling that function. Prominent Whigs of this type included William H. Seward in New York, Abraham Lincoln in Illinois, and Edward Bates in Missouri.¹⁶

A detailed look at New York in 1854 is worthwhile. Preston King had replaced Van Buren as leader of the free-soil Democrats in New York. At the 1854 Democratic convention, he led a walkout to protest Soft support for Nebraska.¹⁷ An anti-Nebraska convention was held during the summer at Saratoga and attended by both Whigs and Barnburners. The Saratoga convention recessed for the Democratic and Whig conventions and then reconvened in Auburn in late September, where it was attended by only about two hundred people. A temperance convention and a Free Democratic convention were meeting there at the same time. Weed managed it so that the “fusionists” endorsed the Whig ticket while he prevented the formation of a Republican Party. The Know Nothings had a very strong showing in the 1854 state election. In the legislature there were only two Democrats, both Softs. Temperance and nativism were the two big issues that year, not Nebraska, and as a result, the legislature was strongly dry. “Parties are now in a state of disorganization—rather of utter anarchy,” commented Benjamin Butler.¹⁸

NATIVISM, KNOW NOTHINGS, AND THE AMERICAN PARTY

The background to the success of the American Republicans (a Northeast party from 1843 to 1847) and later of the Know Nothings was the emigration from Europe to America of some 2.9 million immigrants between 1845 and 1854, more than in the previous seven decades combined. They made up 14.5 percent of the 1845 population—a figure that has never been surpassed in American history. Almost all of these immigrants were either Germans or Irish: some two million Irish emigrated from Ireland during the Irish famine of 1845 to 1850 with nearly three fourths of them coming to America. Of these, 80–90 percent were unskilled laborers and 90 percent were Catholics. The massive migration in both cases was caused by potato crop failures in the old countries. By 1855, immigrants outnumbered natives in Chicago, Detroit, and Milwaukee and would soon surpass

natives in New York City, Brooklyn, Buffalo, Cleveland, and Cincinnati. Relatively few immigrants settled in the South. These immigrants bumped up against an American culture that was overwhelmingly Anglo-Saxon and Protestant. The demands regarding public funding of parochial schools were in response to Seward's funding of parochial schools in New York for Catholics.¹⁹

In the 1840s, a number of nativist fraternal organizations were founded in parallel to the American Republican Party. The most important was the Order of the Star Spangled Banner (OSSB) founded in New York City by Charles Allen in 1849 or 1850. In April 1852, Allen relinquished control of the Order to James W. Barker a prominent dry goods merchant and skilled organizer. Expansion of the Order was rapid after April 1852 and the following year it was infiltrated by members of a rival nativist organization. Eventually the Order became known as the Know Nothings because members were instructed to answer that they "knew nothing" if questioned about the organization. Greeley dubbed them the "Know Nothings" and the organization used the term to refer to themselves informally. This is because the organization was a secret society with secret rituals and membership. There was no central governing body for the order. In the summer of 1854, a national convention met in New York City with delegates from thirteen states. When in June 1854 a Know Nothing candidate was elected mayor of Philadelphia by capturing both the Whig vote and a large share of the Democratic vote, a signal was sent across the North that the Know Nothings had arrived politically. This was the first time that many politicians became aware that the organization even existed.²⁰

The Order had a federal system of organization with four levels: 1) local/district; 2) city/county; 3) State Grand Council; and 4) the National Council. The Order had three levels or "degrees" of membership. Secrecy and rituals were used to attract the curious to join.²¹

The object of the Order was to protect its members from foreigners and Catholics. Fear of Catholics was much greater than fear of foreigners in the North. In the South the Order was much less anti-Catholic. The Know Nothing party, which in 1855 was organized as the American Party, was really a "no Popery" party. Like the other political parties, the Know Nothings were divided sectionally. Northerners favored high tariffs and homesteads, while Southerners wanted low tariffs and territorial expansion into cotton-growing areas. The only common point was hatred of foreigners and Catholics. The Southerners did not dislike native Catholics, as in Louisiana and Maryland, and even allowed them membership in the party. California Know Nothings also actively recruited both Catholics and foreigners, because the party there was really a reform party rather than a nativist party. The Know Nothings made their first independent nominations in October 1854. By the end of 1854 there were at least 10,000 local lodges and a total membership of one million.²²

The Know Nothings had much in common with the Republicans. Most Republicans were Protestants who were antislavery and were from a skilled artisan, professional, or rural farming background. Most were ethnically of

Yankee stock. The same is true of the Know Nothings. Both parties conceived of themselves as reform parties combating nefarious conspiracies. Most Northern Know Nothings were antislavery and most Republicans were to some extent nativists.

The Know Nothings were not only a reaction to the large wave of immigration from 1845–54, but also to the unprecedented levels of corruption that had eroded the public's faith in the two main parties. One recent history refers to the 1848–61 period as the "plundering generation." Historian Mark Summers sees this political corruption as being responsible for the rise of the Know Nothings. Whigs were more likely to become Know Nothings, as Democrats tended to benefit from this corruption. But the Know Nothings were a reform party reacting to the practices of both main parties. A fixation with patronage, the disappearance of the old economic issues of national bank and tariffs, and the disappearance of many of the differences between the main parties in the early fifties led many to conclude that the two main parties had become hopelessly corrupted and needed to be replaced rather than reformed from within. This is the argument of antebellum historian Michael Holt.²³

Native-born Americans were convinced that nearly all Irish immigrants supported slavery, so some antislavery politicians became nativists. Many rural residents joined the Know Nothings once they learned that the Order was opposed to Kansas-Nebraska. For large numbers of evangelical Protestants stretching from Massachusetts across to northern Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana, the triumvirate of evil became "Slavery, Romanism and Rum" and once it became clear that Know Nothings opposed all three, many joined the party. Many antislavery and temperance advocates joined the party as a temporary stepping-stone until something else came along to replace the Whig and Democratic parties. Once it became apparent to Whigs what the Know Nothings had done, many Whigs and Free Soilers began joining the Order so that they could become elected to public office and then take over the organization as a means of self-defense. In 1854, Know Nothing voters tended to be anti-Catholic, anti-Nebraska, antiliquor, and antiparty.²⁴

Some 75 Know Nothing congressmen were elected in 1854, most on Republican or anti-Nebraska tickets. In Massachusetts, the governor, all state officers, and all state senators were Know Nothings. Henry Gardner, a former Whig, had been elected governor with 63 percent of the vote over three rivals. The Massachusetts state house consisted of a single Whig, a single Free Soiler, and 376 Know Nothings. Eleven Know Nothings were elected to Congress from Massachusetts—seven of them former Free Soilers.²⁵

Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Connecticut all became Know Nothing states in 1855 and in New York, Pennsylvania, and California most elected state officials were Know Nothings. Maryland and Kentucky went Know Nothing that year while Tennessee remained Democrat by only a small margin. In the South, Know Nothing lodges did not spring up until the spring and summer of 1854—a year or two behind the North. The party nearly carried Virginia, Georgia,

Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana in 1854 and elected some minor officials in Texas. The total Know Nothing vote in the South, east of the Mississippi River was only 16,000 votes less than what the Democrats received. In Wisconsin the Know Nothings held the balance-of-power between the Democrats and the Republicans. Both the Know Nothings and many impartial observers expected an American Party candidate to win the White House in 1856. The *New York Herald* was convinced that the Americans, as the Know Nothings formally became in 1855, would carry ten states in the presidential election. Free Soiler Henry Wilson who had joined the Know Nothings in 1854 in a purely opportunistic move claimed that the new party could count on 1.25 million popular votes—probably enough to give them victory in 1856 in a three-way contest. Even some Catholic papers accepted the inevitability of a Know Nothing president in the White House in 1857.²⁶

In 1854–55 there were up to two dozen parties in some localities competing for votes. In this situation the Know Nothings usually won because their opponents distributed their votes across many parties. Know Nothings showed little strength in the Midwest. In the South they carefully crafted their message to appeal to conservative former Whigs using conservative principles. The Know Nothings carried Delaware, Maryland, California, and Kentucky in 1854–55 and nearly added Tennessee and Virginia to this list.²⁷

Wilson called for an anti-Nebraska convention at Worcester for July 20, 1854. Few Democrats or Whigs attended and even the Adams-Palfrey faction of Free Democrats stayed away. The convention organized a Republican Party and set a date for a nominating convention in September 1854. Wilson was elected the Republican gubernatorial candidate. Many Free Democrats declined to join the new party and remained inactive. The Republican Party was simply the Free Democrats with a new name. Many former coalitionists flocked into the Know Nothing movement in order to break the power of Irish Catholics who were seen as uniformly proslavery. Wilson secretly joined the Know Nothings in early 1854 before the Republican Party had even been formed in the state. Throughout the summer and fall of 1854 Wilson belonged to two competing political parties. He attended the state Know Nothing convention on October 18, 1854, and supported Henry Gardner for the gubernatorial nomination. Then a few days before the election, Wilson declined the Republican gubernatorial nomination in a letter leading to the collapse of the Republican Party.²⁸

Gardner was elected governor with a 35,000-vote majority. Anson Burlingame was elected to Congress as a Know Nothing. Wilson attended Know Nothing meetings throughout November 1854 and began to campaign for the Senate. On January 31, 1855, a bare majority in the Massachusetts senate elected Wilson to the Senate after the lower house elected him without a contest. Adams said of Wilson: “A man who will cheat as he has done in the last campaign, can never be expected to do otherwise, provided the temptation is sufficient.” Veteran abolitionist Theodore Parker wrote to Wilson that although he liked Wilson personally, he would have preferred to see Adams or S.C. Phillips

have the Senate seat because they both lacked his own intense personal ambition. "You have been seeking for office with all your might," wrote Parker.²⁹

The Know Nothings were the type of successful fusion party that Wilson had been attempting to organize since 1848. Thanks to Wilson, the Know Nothings in Massachusetts had a strong Free Soil flavor. Both Chase and Seward eagerly looked forward to Wilson's arrival in the Senate. When he got there, he had himself seated in the rear as an "anti-Nebraska Know Nothing" so he would not have to sit with either the main Know Nothing group or the Free Democrats.³⁰

Some Protestant denominations were more prone to vote for the Know Nothings than other denominations. Religious sectarian influence on party affiliation was mediated by state party histories, but once established, proved to be very durable.³¹

In the upper South, one can trace a continuity of political sentiment in areas that voted Whig in 1848 and 1852, voted for the American Party in 1855 and 1856, and voted for either Douglas or Bell in the presidential election of 1860. This was a pro-Unionist vote. These were not Southern nationalists but conservative pro-Unionist voters. The Northeast was the most solid Known Nothing of any region in the mid-1850s as voters had experienced two decades of nativist propaganda by the 1850s and it had had an effect.³²

Whig historian Michael F. Holt disagrees with the conventional historical opinion that Southern Know Nothings were merely conservative Whigs in disguise. He gives three reasons for this dissent: First, not all Whigs joined the Know Nothings in the South. Second, the Southern Know Nothings had the same concerns as Northern Know Nothings as regards Catholics and foreigners. Third and most important, Southern Democrats joined the Order by the thousands in 1854. The Whigs who remained independent were the ones who ended up making an independent Whig nomination of Millard Fillmore in September 1856 after he was already an American candidate.³³

Eastern laborers, Southern planters, and Western farmers as well as nativists were interested in restrictions on foreigners. Nativist issues and debate occupied much of the time and attention of the 34th Congress due to the large number of American Party congressmen who were elected in 1854 and 1855 and held the balance-of-power between the Democrats and Republicans. A bill for a 21-year naturalization period before citizenship was granted, was introduced in Congress in December 1854 and was referred to the judicial committee and never reported out. A year later it was reintroduced and reported back from the same committee with a negative recommendation. The failure of the American Party to enact its basic proposals led to a public loss of confidence in the party and sped its decline along. The Know Nothings were unable to enact their program at the national level due to constitutional restrictions, and at the state level due to a lack of expertise and experience on the part of newly elected legislators. The 1854 Massachusetts legislature was both the most expensive and least productive legislature in state history up until that point in time. In 1857, Massachusetts adopted a literacy test for voting, similar to one adopted in Connecticut in 1855.

These two laws were the only legislative results of Know Nothing rule in New England.³⁴

The Know Nothing electorate proved to be very unstable over time with many lodge members joining the organization and then leaving within six months or less. By mid-1855, Know Nothing secrecy was coming under fire from the other main parties and reporters had managed to penetrate lodges of the organization and expose its secret rituals depriving them of the air of awe and mystery that allowed them to attract the curious. Gang warfare occurred between Know Nothings and Democrats in several major Eastern cities on election day. These fights tended to further discredit the party in the eyes of respectable persons from its target electorate.³⁵

The Second Party System was ended in 1854–56 by a combination of the reaction to the Kansas-Nebraska Act in the Midwest and the damage to the Whig Party by the Know Nothings in the East. The Democrats were able to survive because of their solid support in the South and among immigrants in the large cities of the Northeast. In late 1855, the Whigs became convinced that due to damage from the Know Nothings they would not be able to revive their party as they had anticipated in May 1854. In the East, ethnocultural issues like temperance and anti-Catholicism did the party in. In the West, the Whigs were replaced by either Republicans or by fusion coalitions comprised of Whigs, Republicans, anti-Nebraska Democrats, and Know Nothings. In the East, they were replaced by Know Nothings who had more time to organize. The Whigs were first weakened by slavery and they were then killed off by mass defections perpetrated by the Know Nothings in 1854–55.³⁶

During the course of 1855, Whig politicians in both sections of the country made quick and sometimes detailed mental calculations aided by correspondence with friends in other states, to determine two things. First, would the party have enough members to hold a nominating convention and field a ticket that stood any chance of being elected within the state. Second, were the Whigs competitive in enough states across the country that they could capture the minimum number of electoral votes needed for victory in 1856. When Whig politicians came up with negative answers to these two questions they then began to make comparisons and calculations about which rival party it would be best to join. A determining factor in many decisions on this issue was how the politician felt about slavery. Antislavery politicians in the North essentially had a choice between the Americans and the Republicans and the degree of antislavery sentiment versus nativism determined whether one joined the Americans or the Republicans. In the South, the factor determining the choice would be Southern nationalism—“nationalists” would join the Democrats and conservatives would join the Know Nothings.

The Know Nothing party in New York was a real fusion party with candidates coming from all of the party factions in the state. In late September 1854 there were three separate political conventions at Auburn within a single week (anti-Nebraska, temperance, and Free Democrats) but no Republican Party emerged

from the ferment. Many of the antislavery politicians in New York such as Greeley, *New York Times* editor Henry Raymond, and Preston King were opposed to the formation of a new antislavery party. The following month, the results of the 1854 state election proved to be “a regular smash-up” in the words of the *New York Evening Journal*. A Whig state senator was elected governor with a margin of only 300 votes. Free Democrats did quite poorly in the election.³⁷

Seward was easily reelected to the Senate on the opening day of the Assembly, allowing him to contemplate fusion with equanimity. In the spring of 1855, professional politicians from the Whigs and Soft Democrats organized a number of fusions to defeat the Know Nothings. The fusions were always presented as being ad hoc short-term electoral alliances. In May 1855, Weed began negotiating the terms of fusion with the Barnburner leadership. Weed and King were both practical machine politicians who liked each other personally, making the negotiations that much easier. They agreed on a joint Whig-Republican convention at Syracuse on September 26, 1855, and issued a call for it on July 20.³⁸

Joseph Medill, editor of *Cleveland Leader*, who would soon move to Chicago, organized the Independent Order of the Friends of Equal Rights or “Know Somethings” as an antidote to the Know Nothings following the 1854 elections. The organization began mass recruiting in January 1855. It was only organized in four states: Massachusetts, New York, northern Ohio, and Illinois. At their peak they totaled between ten and twenty thousand members nationally. They served mostly as a “holding tank” for nativists until they could be transferred to the Republicans.³⁹

Parallel with this, the Silver Gray faction of Whigs from New York and Pennsylvania organized the takeover of the Know Nothing movement in the summer of 1855 and its transformation into a regular political party, the American Party. The Silver Grays saw the Know Nothings as a conservative Unionist alternative to the existing parties and a possible successor party to the Whigs. The party held its first national convention in June 1855 at Philadelphia. After incumbent Governor Henry Wise of Virginia won reelection by tarring the Know Nothings as abolitionists, the Order’s National Council wanted to “nationalize” the party by eliminating any discussions of the slavery issue so that the party could continue to expand in the South without becoming vulnerable. Antislavery Know Nothings from the North feared that Southern Know Nothings would combine with conservatives from the North to produce a proslavery platform. Both Republicans and Democrats monitored the American Party convention with interest. Republicans were divided over how to deal with the nativists. Most of the antislavery radicals like Seward, Giddings, and Greeley wanted to destroy the Americans as quickly as possible. Others like Henry Raymond, *Cincinnati Gazette* editor William Schouler, and Chase wanted to let the Order die a natural death and then pick up the pieces. With this electorate, the Republicans would then be able to sweep the country.⁴⁰

Henry Wilson hoped to join his delegation with the New Hampshire delegation to split the American Party over slavery and force Know Nothings in the

North into the Republican Party. On the first day of the convention, June 8, 1855, there were a number of challenges to delegation credentials especially to the Louisiana delegation, which allowed French Catholic Creoles to join the party. The Virginians tried to have Wilson barred from the convention, but Henry Gardner and the rest of the delegation refused to enter unless Wilson was allowed to join them.⁴¹

The platform was presented to the delegates on the fourth day of the convention after having been finalized by the platform committee. It contained fourteen resolutions with the twelfth resolution—on slavery—being the controversial one. The resolution called for recognition of the status quo on the issue. Virginia delegate William Burwell, who had authored the majority version of the slavery resolution, claimed that Southern Know Nothings were not really motivated by nativism, but had joined the Order to defend the Union. In exchange for their support, the North should support them on slavery. The minority version of Section 12, as the resolution became known, was rejected 91 to 52 by Northern conservatives joining with Southerners. The majority version of the platform then passed by a vote of 78 to 63. Although the Northern dissidents did not formally walk out of the convention, 63 out of 75 of the Northern delegates repudiated the slavery section of the platform. Southerners then blamed the New York delegation—the Silver Grays—for misrepresenting New York opinion on the issue and accused them of voting for the resolution in exchange for Southern support for a presidential nominee from New York.⁴²

After the convention floor had cleared for the evening after the platform had been adopted, Wilson and Samuel Bowles, editor of the Springfield *Republican*, met with delegates from twelve Northern states. Wilson and Bowles drew up a public appeal that called for the restoration of the Missouri Compromise, the admission of both Kansas and Nebraska as free states, and the divorce of the federal government from slavery. The delegates vowed to take the appeal to their state councils and attempt to get it passed.⁴³

The Southern Know Nothings were a relatively homogenous set of former Whigs and Democrats compared to the Northern Know Nothings who had a wide range of opinions on slavery. The American Party would break up, but not quite as quickly as many observers anticipated. Within days of the Philadelphia convention, state councils in the North began meeting and repudiating Section 12 and withdrawing from the National Council. “The American party would have been blown to atoms in every Northern state” had it acquiesced in Section 12, insisted Connecticut governor, William Minor.⁴⁴

Salmon Chase wanted to attract Know Nothing support for his own gubernatorial bid in 1855. The Republicans and Know Nothings ran a fusion ticket in the state election in Ohio in 1855 with Chase heading the ticket and most of the lesser offices going to Know Nothings. On this basis, some have claimed that Chase was a Know Nothing in 1855, but there is no evidence for that claim.⁴⁵

The American Party members remained strong in New York and Massachusetts where the Republicans had trouble organizing. These victories

gave the Americans a new lease on life in the North. The Americans won state elections in 1855 in ten states. The party elected nine governors in 1855 and only deft manipulations by Weed prevented Daniel Ullmann, a former Silver Gray Whig, from being elected governor of New York. This is compared to the Republicans whose only state of importance in 1855 was Ohio, and they needed many Know Nothing votes in order to accomplish this.⁴⁶

There were three separate “factions” or opinions about future policy with the American Party in the North. The moderates believed that the party was competitive as long as it backed the restoration of the Missouri Compromise. The conservatives thought that the party should put Unionism above everything else. The “fusionists” thought that the party was in sharp decline and must eventually join the Republicans. They were divided over those who wanted to emphasize patronage in fusion negotiations and those who wanted to get the Republicans to adopt nativist principles. The moderates held the balance-of-power within the party and could determine its future.⁴⁷

The fusionists varied in their attitudes toward the nativists. Those who were the most pragmatic or opportunist, like Henry Wilson and Chase, favored using the nativists to advance the antislavery cause by winning seats and converting as many nativists to antislavery as possible. Those in the antislavery movement who were the most doctrinaire were the most emphatic about making no compromise or coalition with the Know Nothings. Gamaliel Bailey branded the Know Nothings a “detestable organization.” Seward, who had always been a champion of immigrants and Catholics, was also a prominent enemy of the Know Nothings.⁴⁸

THE REPUBLICAN PARTY IN THE EAST

Wilson hoped to organize a new antislavery fusion movement in Massachusetts in time for the state election in 1855. Wilson allowed Adams to take control of a state fusion convention called for September 1855 in Worcester. Former Whig Julius Rockwell defeated Henry Gardner to win the nomination of the relaunched Republican Party in the fall of 1855. Wilson endorsed the result but Gardner led the Know Nothings out and they nominated him on a separate ticket for governor. Wilson thus ended his association with the Know Nothings, which had lasted for less than two years, and returned to the Republicans.⁴⁹

The 1855 New York state election was a four-way race: Hards, Softs, Republicans, and Americans. In October 1855, Whigs who had refused to merge, began attempting to organize a “Straight-Out Whig” movement. They were condemned by the mainstream Whig-Republican press. Most Barnburners remained within the Democratic Party in 1855. A few Democratic papers defected to the Republicans that year, but most stayed loyal to the existing party. The *Albany Evening Journal* published in October a list of 88 Republican papers, at least 65 of these had been Whig papers before. In New York, the Republican Party was largely the old Whig Party in new antislavery garb.⁵⁰

Fusion occurred most easily in counties that were strongly antislavery and in counties where the Know Nothings had helped to weaken the existing parties. Where there was no such breakup, fusion was difficult. The Americans carried New York City on November 6, 1855, with the Hards coming in second, and the Republicans coming last.⁵¹

Seward, who had made a bid for leadership of the new party with a speech entitled “The Advent of the Republican Party,” on the steps of the state capitol in Albany on October 12, 1855, was not bothered by the Know Nothing victory in the state election in 1855. He regarded it as merely a temporary setback and convinced Republican leaders that the six-week campaign had not really given the new party time to coalesce.⁵²

Prominent Jacksonian Democrat Francis P. Blair, Sr., the former editor of the *Congressional Globe* newspaper and a personal advisor to President Jackson—who called him *Blar*, held a special Christmas dinner at his Silver Spring mansion in Maryland, outside the capital. Invited were prominent members of the new Republican Party from its various factions, Nathaniel Banks, formerly a Democrat and recently a Know Nothing, and Charles Sumner of Massachusetts, Preston King of New York, Governor Chase of Ohio, Gamaliel Bailey of the *National Era*, and of course Blair himself. The guest list was a careful representation of the new party’s geographic regions and factions: Chase, Sumner, and Bailey represented the Free Soilers; Banks represented the Know Nothings; and Blair represented the old Democrats. They all agreed to back the plan for a national Republican organizing convention to meet somewhere in the East in early 1856. They also bandied about the names of various possible nominees but only seriously discussed the prospects of John Charles Fremont, the Pathfinder, who Blair announced that he was backing. Chase had plans of his own to run and many of those present suspected that Seward might run as well. Chase now knew who his competitor would be.⁵³

Free Soil, Free Men, and Fremont

THE REPUBLICANS ORGANIZE

As 1856 began, no viable Republican Party yet existed in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the site of the first Republican national organizing convention in February that year. The party had been successfully organized at the state level in most of the Midwest, with the important exception of Illinois, and in New England. A week before the Pittsburgh convention met, Gamaliel Bailey editorialized against any deals with the American Party and wrote that he wanted an independent Republican nomination. He attributed the election of Nathaniel Banks as speaker of the House at the beginning of the month to a deal that both the Republicans and the North Americans had made with the South Americans.¹

Greeley ascribed Bailey's actions to a desire to nominate Chase. But by 1856 Bailey had no special desire to promote Chase's candidacy. Bailey told Chase that he thought that Seward was a stronger candidate than he was. Bailey also told Chase that he did not expect a Republican to be elected president in 1856. But he and Chase remained friends. Bailey also advised Chase that he considered Greeley "a fool in all practical matters."²

Between 300 and 400 delegates attended the first Republican national organizing convention in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on February 22, 1856. The largest delegations came from Ohio, New York, and Pennsylvania (naturally), with poor attendance from New England due to poor weather and transport difficulties. There were delegates from all the Northern states and from five slave states—the four border states and Virginia. Among the most prominent delegates attending were editor Horace Greeley of the *New York Tribune*, Preston King of New York, Joshua Giddings of Ohio, editor Joseph Medill of Cleveland, Owen Lovejoy of

Illinois, David Wilmot of Pennsylvania, Senator Charles Durkee of Wisconsin, and George Julian of Indiana.

While the Republicans were meeting nationally for the first time, the Americans were meeting nationally for the second time at their nominating convention. The Republicans were closely watching these conventions to see if the nativist Americans repeated their split of the previous year and to see who the nominees would be. Thomas Spooner, the Know Nothing leader from Ohio telegraphed the Ohio Republican delegation in Pittsburgh: "The American Party are no longer united. Raise the Republican banner. Let there be no further extension of slavery. The Americans are with you." The delegates gave a loud cheer after the message was read out to them by Spooner.

The convention formed two important committees: a resolutions committee and an organizing committee. The former produced a number of standard free soil antislavery resolutions along with a call to admit Kansas as a free state. The platform was largely written by Henry Raymond, editor of the *New York Times*, following the advice of Greeley. There were no resolutions about the Fugitive Slave Law, none about the District of Columbia, and none about not admitting new slave states. Nativism was ignored by the Republicans so as not to offend their possible new partners. The main problem discussed at Pittsburgh was how to attract Know Nothings without losing the support of German-Americans who were overwhelmingly antislavery and antitemperance. The Republicans failed to adopt a policy on the subject. The organizing committee consisted of a single member from every Northern state and decided that a nominating convention would be held in Philadelphia on June 17. The organizing committee then became the Republican National Committee.³

The same day that the Republicans were holding their organizing convention in Pittsburgh, the American Party's first presidential nominating convention was opening in Philadelphia. Unlike the previous year's convention, this year the Americans had no explicit reference to slavery in their platform. Instead they explicitly endorsed the principle of popular sovereignty and called upon all existing laws to be obeyed until repealed. Many Northern delegates walked out at this point, especially those from New England, as well as some of those from Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, and Iowa left. Next came the nomination. The only contestants were former Whig President Millard Fillmore and George Law of New York, an industrialist in the construction and transportation industries. With the Northern walkout except from New York, Fillmore easily beat Law 179 to 24 for the nomination. Fillmore also had the advantage of having led his own Whig faction into the American Party and of being genuinely popular with Southerner conservatives for his role in the Compromise of 1850. For his running mate the Southern-dominated convention chose Andrew Jackson Donelson of Tennessee, the nephew of the former president. At this point, a second Northern walkout occurred by those delegates who supported Law and were disappointed or who could not abide a slaveholder being nominated. It was partially organized by the Ohio delegation. The Americans were badly compromised before their campaign

had even begun. It was now a question for the Republicans of how best to attract the North Americans (as the dissidents were known), without splitting their own ranks. Weed admitted that he had overestimated Fillmore's popular appeal as a candidate. House Speaker Rep. Nathaniel Banks reported from Washington, "here the nomination is dead."⁴

Thurlow Weed appreciated early on that Fillmore could potentially be a bonus for the Republicans. "Fillmore's nomination will impose upon the Democratic Party the necessity of contesting every Southern state." Potentially, Fillmore could win the election for Fremont if he did well enough in the South. Future Tennessee governor Andrew Johnson declared that Buchanan was harder to defend in the South than any other prominent Democrat who had been considered as a candidate.⁵

That night the dissidents, the North Americans, met at the Merchant's Hotel in Philadelphia and drafted a *Declaration of Principles* that condemned the convention's refusal to demand the restoration of the Missouri Compromise and condemned the seating of the Louisiana delegation, with its Catholic members, with only four abstaining. The splitters voted to meet in New York on June 12 to make their own independent nomination for president. The Republicans would have almost four months to organize a response.⁶

The American Party had come between a rock and a hard place: they would have had to endorse a restoration of the Missouri Compromise in order to appease the Northerners; if they did that they would have killed the new party's chances in the South. This gave the Republicans an opportunity. Fillmore's early nomination left him vulnerable to assaults by the press until the other parties convened. The early nomination also gave the Republicans more time to organize a merger with the North Americans.⁷

That same day, February 22, as the Republicans and Americans were meeting separately in Pennsylvania, an important meeting was taking place in Illinois. Abraham Lincoln attended a meeting of Illinois editors who were interested in organizing a new antislavery party at Decatur. He convinced them to call for a fusion convention at Bloomington in central Illinois on May 24. He then began coaxing anti-Nebraska Democrats and Whigs to attend the convention. The caning of Charles Sumner by Rep. Preston Brooks in May made it that much easier to convince Democrats to attend. The convention was advertised as an anti-Nebraska convention rather than a Republican convention. It was attended by prominent Whigs, Democrats, Know Nothings, Free Soilers, and Germans.

In the spring of 1855, there had been a three-way split in the Illinois state legislature in the election of a new U.S. senator. Lincoln, who gave up a seat in the Illinois house for the chance to run for the Senate, had more votes than the other two groups but not a majority. The other two groups were a group of anti-Nebraska Democrats backing Lyman Trumbull, and the pro-Nebraska faction of the party. Lincoln pulled out of the race and had his supporters switch their support to Trumbull so as to prevent the Douglas Democrats from winning the seat. This won Lincoln Trumbull's gratitude. In early 1856, Trumbull switched

his allegiance from Democrat to Republican. He was joined by Hannibal Hamlin, Benjamin F. Butler, Gideon Welles, and Francis P. Blair. Blair joined the Republicans after the Pierce administration failed to provide his son Montgomery with a patronage appointment in Washington. By 1856, a quarter of Republicans were former Democrats. The platform agreed to at the convention was a conservative antiextensionist one, but it did call for the admission of Kansas as a free state. The slavery position amounted to a return to the Missouri Compromise.⁸

THE ROAD TO PHILADELPHIA

The Republicans had two major tasks in recruiting the Know Nothings. First, they had to ensure that the North Americans did not nominate John Charles Fremont, who was popular with the nativists, before the Republicans had nominated him. If the Americans were to nominate him first he would have become known as the American candidate even if the Republicans subsequently nominated him. This is what occurred with Millard Fillmore and the (South) Americans and the Whigs. Second, they had to prevent the Germans from deserting the Republicans because of North American support. The second task was closely linked to the first. "The foreigners of Iowa, Illinois, and Wisconsin will leave us *en masse*."⁹

In late 1855, there appeared to be four potential Republican presidential candidates for the nomination the following year: House speaker Nathaniel P. Banks, Governor Salmon Chase, Justice John McLean, and Senator William H. Seward. Banks had transferred his loyalty from the Know Nothings to the Republicans in 1855. As a reward the Republicans supported him as their candidate for the speakership in December 1855. This way the Republicans were guaranteed to have the support of the North Americans in Congress. After his election, Banks decided to throw his support behind Fremont. This helped many others to back Fremont. Chase wanted the nomination, but lacked the support of major Republican leaders. Seward was eager to run, but Thurlow Weed, the Albany political boss and Seward's political manager, was convinced that the Republicans could not possibly win the presidency the first time out, especially with the Americans in the election. Seward continued to build support for his candidacy. McLean wanted the nomination but was not able or willing to openly campaign for it from the bench of the Supreme Court. Many Know Nothing supporters of Banks switched to support McLean, when they learned that Banks had made a deal with the Republicans. McLean had expressed support for nativism in the past and was active in the Methodist church—a denomination heavily represented in the order.¹⁰

It was Banks who first discovered Fremont as a potential Republican presidential nominee in mid-1855. Many Republicans were looking for a former Democrat, rather than a former Whig or Know Nothing, as a candidate in order to ensure the support of former Democrats who had joined the Republicans as well as those who were still Democrats. Fremont had four things going for him: First,

he was young and vigorous, only 45 in 1856. Second, as the Pathfinder explorer of the West and the conqueror of California he was a genuine national hero, comparable to Zachary Taylor or Winfield Scott. Third, he was a Democrat. Fourth, having been a senator for only a little over a month he had no embarrassing political record. Blair originally wanted to run Fremont as an independent, but this changed after he became a Republican in late 1855. Many Republicans considered Fremont to be the most electable of the potential candidates. They liked the fact that he was a former Democrat and that he was basically neutral on the nativist issue. Unlike Seward, this would not be a minus for him. Blair provided Fremont with the platform to run upon and Fremont's friendship with Charles Robinson, the political leader of the free soilers in Kansas gave him credibility as an antislavery candidate. Fremont's public campaign for the presidency began with the publication of a letter dated March 17 to Charles Robinson in the Lawrence, Kansas *Free State* newspaper on April 7. Two days later it was reprinted in the *Boston Atlas*. This began the Fremont media campaign. Seward wrote to Weed on April 4 that the majority of Republican leaders in Washington supported Fremont for the nomination.¹¹

On May 20, Senator Charles Sumner rose in the Senate to make one of his great efforts of oratory, "The Crime Against Kansas," in which he would indict the Slave Power for its crimes in Kansas as well as elsewhere. "You will hear nothing but Kansas from this time forever," Sumner informed abolitionist Theodore Parker in February 1856. Sumner had received many letters from free soil settlers in Kansas pleading for aid to defend themselves against the border ruffians. Sumner pitched his two-day speech more toward the public than toward the Senate. Against the explicit advice of Seward, who reviewed the speech ahead of time, Sumner left in a number of *ad hominem* attacks including one quite vicious against Senator Andrew P. Butler of South Carolina. He claimed that Butler had adopted slavery as his mistress and he also criticized Butler's habit of spitting while speaking. He also attacked Senator Douglas. After the speech he engaged in an unprecedented exchange of invective with Douglas.¹²

Two days later, a day after the Sack of Lawrence, Rep. Preston Brooks of South Carolina, the nephew of Senator Butler, entered the empty Senate chamber where Sumner was at his desk franking copies of his speech to mail to constituents and supporters. Brooks walked up to Sumner and began to assault him with his gutta percha cane on his forehead. Sumner who was quite strong literally ripped his desk, which was bolted to the floor, out of its moorings in an attempt to escape. After a few blows Sumner collapsed on the floor and a fellow congressman pulled Brooks off of Sumner. Sumner would not be well enough to return to the Senate on a full-time basis for another three and a half years as he suffered from the actual injuries, the quack treatments of a French doctor, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Southerners charged that he was shamming for publicity's sake.¹³

For the South, Brooks had merely acted according to the code of honor in thrashing someone who had insulted his relative. He was a hero who received

countless new canes from admirers to replace his damaged cane. To the North, Brooks had responded to reasoned argument with violence. The caning outraged even conservative Whigs in Massachusetts like Edward Everett, let alone Republicans. Brooks died of a mysterious illness in early 1857 at the age of 37. In the South, there were numerous eulogies for him and he was compared to Brutus. In the North, abolitionists thought that it was simply God's vengeance.¹⁴

The Republicans had the two issues on which they would base their 1856 presidential campaign: bleeding Kansas and bleeding Sumner. Both the events in Kansas and in Washington were reported to readers across the North through a biased antislavery press. Some of the Kansas reporters for the major papers were more activists than journalists, such as abolitionists John H. Kagi and James Redpath who worked as reporters for the *New York Tribune*. They reported a one-sided version of events that made the actual actions of the border ruffians—bad enough in fact—even worse. For instance, the *Tribune* never let its readers know that peace had returned to Kansas in 1855 after the November standoff.¹⁵ The fact that Rep. Brooks was only fined for the assault, a fine that was paid for him by admirers, only magnified the sense of outrage that Northerners felt. It would be returned three years later when John Brown was cheered as a martyr and hero by abolitionists in the North rather than as a criminal.

The Democrats met in convention at Cincinnati, Queen City of the West, at the beginning of June. There were three presidential candidates: incumbent President Franklin Pierce, Senator Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois, and former Secretary of State James Buchanan, who was then ambassador to London. Pierce did not understand that he was a political liability for his bungling in Kansas. The Slave Power was perfectly ready to discard him and adopt another doughface, Buchanan or Douglas, as for the first time in decades the South did not have its own candidate. The need of the Democrats as a party was to have a candidate who was not connected with Kansas. Douglas was connected by his sponsorship of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, which made him popular in the South and unpopular in the North. Pierce was damaged by his misadministration of Kansas during his four years in office. Buchanan had been a loyal Democrat for four decades and could be counted on to deliver his home state of Pennsylvania. Douglas could be counted on to deliver his home state, but might well cost the party more support than he could deliver. A week before the convention met, the *New York Tribune* predicted that Buchanan would be the nominee “by virtue not of his own strength, but of the weakness and odiousness of his rivals.”¹⁶

Pierce and Douglas remained deadlocked for fourteen straight ballots during the first day of balloting. Greeley attributed the delay to the delegates having trouble in finding “some northern Benedict Arnold.” That night Pierce's managers met with Douglas's managers and they agreed to withdraw Pierce's name from contention. Douglas was still unable to get the two-thirds majority required of Democratic nominees. So, rather than wait until a new dark horse candidate was found and nominated or until Douglas could muster a two-thirds

majority, his managers withdrew his name from consideration. Buchanan was nominated as the Democratic absentee candidate. John Breckinridge of Kentucky was chosen as vice president, because he was the candidate of the Douglas supporters. This was not revealed until 1860 when the two were rival nominees for the presidency.¹⁷

Nathaniel P. Banks then pulled one of the slickest tricks in American political history on behalf of the Republicans. Banks in many ways was a younger Massachusetts version of Lincoln—a self-educated ambitious young politician from a working class background. Banks assumed the presidency of the fusion convention in Worcester that was organized by Henry Wilson. During 1855, Banks developed a reputation in Congress as an effective antislavery speaker. Banks was one of three possible Republican candidates chosen to be its nominee for the speakership of the House. Banks offered statements designed to win as broad a support as possible. Balloting in the contest lasted for over a month until Banks finally won on the 133rd ballot by a plurality of 103 to 100 over the Democrat and South American candidate, William Aiken. He won only because the House was growing tired of the deadlock and switched the winning margin from majority to plurality.

Banks carefully assigned to the North and South their fair share of committee assignments, giving the South a majority on the Military Affairs Committee and Naval Affairs Committee, while giving the North a majority on the committees dealing with elections and territories. Former Speaker Howell Cobb of Georgia said that “Banks was in all respects the best presiding officer he had ever seen.” Banks chose not to run for president in 1856 as he thought that he was more valuable in the House and, probably, that the Republicans were likely to lose in 1856. Instead he committed himself to supporting Fremont. Banks thought that Chase was too radical and that Fremont was a good counter to him.¹⁸

Banks was aware of the problem of Fremont’s potential premature nomination by the North Americans. He set his staff and supporters to thinking about how to deal with it. Isaac Sherman, a Banks supporter, came up in May with the idea of Banks running for the nomination as a stalking horse for Fremont. Banks would then withdraw a week later after the Republicans in Philadelphia nominated Fremont. The leading candidates for the North American nomination were Fremont, Banks, and McLean. The Republicans had no confidence that McLean would step aside once he got the nomination as he had been hungering after the presidency for a quarter century or more. So the Republicans consented to the plan. Using Know Nothings who had switched to the Republican Party, they played up Banks as a candidate. The plan worked brilliantly: Banks was nominated in New York City on June 16 while he was in Philadelphia at the Republican convention lining up support for Fremont’s nomination. William F. Johnston, a former governor of Pennsylvania, was nominated vice president. Johnston had failed to win a commitment from Fillmore to appoint him to his cabinet should the American candidate win, so he supported the second nominating convention in New York. George Law, the failed presidential candidate at the

American Party convention in February, was put in charge of a committee to coordinate with the Republicans.¹⁹

David Wilmot presided over the writing of the first Republican platform at Philadelphia. He used standard antiextensionist language used by the Liberty Party and the Free Soil Party since 1844. There was, however, no mention of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. Neither was there any call not to admit any more slave states, nor to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia. The largest section of the antislavery portion was dedicated to Kansas, with a final call for Kansas to be admitted as a free state. Slavery and polygamy were referred to as “twin relics of barbarism.” The antislavery planks took up five-sixths of the platform with the remainder given to a carefully crafted and ambiguous nativist statement that would offend no one, a railroad to the Pacific, and internal improvements on rivers and harbors. Chase was in full agreement with the platform as “[i]t includes denationalization of slavery entire.” The antislavery resolutions were both a result of the makeup of the Resolutions Committee—Wilmot, Preston King, and others—and the general fervor of the convention.²⁰

Fremont released a letter on his position on slavery just as the convention opened. It was meant to shore up his antislavery credentials with the delegations. He probably did not need this. Greeley had endorsed Fremont’s nomination at the beginning of June in the editorial pages of the *Tribune*. Greeley had actually been backing Fremont since the spring. Greeley supported Fremont in large part because as a former Democrat the candidate would not be open to the charge that the Republicans were a “Whig trick” and because he, unlike Seward, was neutral on the nativist question and would not offend either nativists or immigrants. There was also his popular romantic appeal as an explorer of the West.²¹

McLean had his support from the Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maine, Illinois, and Ohio delegations. About half the Ohio delegation, including Giddings, supported McLean; the other half supported Chase. Chase’s managers finally concluded that he did not have a chance after they surveyed several delegations. Chase then allowed his name to be withdrawn from consideration. On June 16, Seward sent a message refusing to allow his name to go before the convention as a candidate after Weed sent him a message stating that it was impossible for him to win in 1856. Historian William Gienapp thinks that Seward would have won the Republican nomination in 1856 had he contested. McLean withdrew his name at the last minute, as did Chase, when it became apparent that he could not possibly win. The first formal ballot had the count of Fremont 520 to McLean 37 and then the nomination was made unanimous. Fremont’s strength was in New England, New York, and the Midwest, with the exception of Ohio. McLean’s main support was in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Fremont’s support at the convention was mainly based upon perceived electability and character as few delegates knew his actual positions on the issues.²²

Then came the nomination of the running mate. The two main candidates were William Dayton of New Jersey and Abraham Lincoln of Illinois. Dayton had the support of the East and Lincoln the support of the Midwest and

the border states. Lincoln was promoted by the Illinois delegation. Dayton, a conservative former Whig, had about three times as much support as Lincoln and easily won. The vice-presidential pick proved to be of much greater importance than was normal because the North Americans thought they had a promise from the Republicans to have a candidate of their choice selected as vice-presidential nominee. This was in exchange for their cooperation on nominating Fremont after Banks withdrew from consideration following Fremont's nomination. Those who made the promise attempted to honor it, but the delegates had simply ignored them. Eventually, William Johnston, the North American candidate for vice president, was appeased with the promise of some patronage if Fremont was elected. Johnston finally withdrew his claim on the vice presidency in a letter to the Republican National Committee on August 29.²³

THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN OF 1856

There were now four presidential nominations and three separate nominees or candidates competing for the presidency. As is normally the case in multicandidate races in a first-past-the-post electoral system, the three-way race quickly broke down into a de facto series of two two-man races. In the North, it was a race between Buchanan and Fremont and in the South between Buchanan and Fillmore. The strategy of both the Democrats and the Republicans was to win enough electoral votes to win an outright victory. The strategy of the South Americans was to win enough electoral votes to throw the election into the House and then to bargain in exchange for throwing the party's support to either Buchanan or Fremont. Of course, Fillmore had to pretend the whole time that he intended to win.

In March 1855, Fillmore had traveled to Europe so as to be out of the country when most of the politicking was going on. He actually met with the Pope in Rome in March 1856, despite being a nominal member of the Order of the Star Spangled Banner and the nominee of a nativist party. Despite wishing to delay his acceptance of the nomination by several months, Fillmore sent his acceptance letter to the American Party on May 21. He returned to the United States, New York City, by ship from Europe on June 29. He then spent the next month traveling leisurely across New York from the port to Buffalo making vaguely political speeches. He made a total of 27 speeches during that month. In Albany he predicted that the election of a Republican president would lead to a civil war. "In the language of the lamented, but immortal Clay: 'I had rather be right than be President.'" Only 3 of Fillmore's 27 speeches mentioned nativist themes, and then only briefly. "Americans should govern America. I regret to say that men who come fresh from the monarchies of the old world, are prepared neither by education, habits of thought, or knowledge of our institutions, to govern America," claimed Fillmore in one of these speeches.²⁴

In early June, the *Richmond Whig* predicted that Fillmore would carry eight Southern states and seven states in the North, and unfortunately Fillmore believed

this propaganda. His managers claimed that Fillmore would win in all the states that the Americans carried in the 1855 elections. The strategy was to win these states plus Missouri and Tennessee, where the Americans came close to victory in 1855, and in Pennsylvania where nativism was rampant and the Republicans were barely organized.²⁵

In order to win in many states, Fillmore would need the support of old Whigs in addition to Know Nothings. On April 12, the Whig state convention in Kentucky called for a national Whig convention to meet in Louisville in July. The Whigs wanted to make their own vice-presidential nomination as many old Whigs thought that having a Jackson on a ticket that they would vote for, was anathema. Because of Louisville's distance from the East and fear that the convention was meant to blackball Fillmore, this convention never met. During a speech at Newburgh, New York, Fillmore disavowed any further membership in the Whig Party. He claimed that "I cannot be one thing to the North and another to the South, nor one thing to the American Party and another to the Whig Party."²⁶

In desperation, after old-line Whigs refused to rally to Fillmore in New York and elsewhere in the North, Fillmore's managers finally recommended what the old-line Whigs had rejected in January and what the candidate had spurned in July—a separate nomination by a straight Whig convention in Baltimore on September 17. Fillmore urged all his non-Know Nothing supporters to attend to ensure that he was indeed the nominee. Without any mention of the Americans, the Whigs gathered in Baltimore and nominated Fillmore and Donelson as the best hope of saving the Union. Edward Bates, a former Whig congressman from St. Louis who would be a Republican candidate in 1860, chaired the Whig convention. There were only 144 men in attendance—the smallest national nominating convention since the Antimasons first gathered in 1831. Almost half the delegates were from New York, and several Midwestern and New England states were not represented at all as well as South Carolina, Texas, and California. Fillmore had no opposition for the nomination.²⁷

With this fifth nomination made, the real contest continued in the North between the Republicans and the Democrats. Fremont was kept isolated, as a political novice, from the running of the campaign in a variety of leisure activities, while his wife Jessie—daughter of Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri, Blair, and a pair of Banks's lieutenants, Isaac Sherman and Charles James, managed the campaign. This inner circle consisted of former members of the three main parties that would make up the Republicans by 1860: Whigs, Democrats, and North Americans. The early summer had been spent going through political intelligence from the field so that the Republican National Committee could plan its overall strategy. Six states in the Upper North were considered safe and New York and Maine seemed good bets for a Republican victory. Massachusetts and Rhode Island were dependent on the level of cooperation with the North Americans—victory was assured in both states if fusion occurred on a common ticket. Six Northern states were in the doubtful column.

To win, the Republicans needed to carry all of the reasonably safe states plus all of the doubtful states except Pennsylvania or Pennsylvania plus two or three of the other doubtful states. Republican leaders in California considered their chances there as hopeless, so they decided to gamble everything on carrying Pennsylvania. This was a risky strategy considering that Buchanan was from Pennsylvania and controlled considerable patronage in the state.²⁸

Until September, the Republican National Committee was often scattered or simply silent. "If we carry this election," complained Charles Dana, "it will be in spite of the most defective organization & smallest resources with which any party ever went into a contest." The National Committee delegated fundraising to state organizations in order to finance their own campaigns. This Committee concentrated its fundraising on New York and Boston. The Democrats, having the advantage of patronage, raised much more money and much more easily. Massachusetts was the only state where the Republicans possibly outspent the Democrats.²⁹

Henry Stanton, the former Liberty man and Free Soiler turned Democrat from New York, was put in charge of the speaker's bureau. He spent most of his energy recruiting speakers for Pennsylvania, but he also tried to fill requests from other states—especially doubtful ones. Stanton put to use all the lessons he had learned as an abolitionist lecturer in the 1830s. He also had all of his connections from antislavery politics over a decade, to exploit, in calling upon speakers. His greatest service to the antislavery cause may well have been the roles that he played in the 1856 and 1860 Republican campaigns.³⁰

The *Tribune* office became the "center for Republican propaganda" during the campaign. The aggregate circulation of the various versions of the paper stood at 280,000 by the time of the election. The four free states that Fremont lost, with the exception of California (Indiana, Illinois, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania), had fewer *Tribune* readers per capita than did the other states of the North. Greeley supplied 150,000 copies weekly of a short campaign biography of Fremont. Greeley also published campaign speeches in German and Welsh—the latter for Pennsylvanian coal miners. Greeley compiled a handbook for Republican workers and speakers entitled *History of the Struggle for Slavery Extension or Restriction in the United States*. The book portrayed the Missouri Compromise, the Compromise of 1850, and the Kansas-Nebraska Act as Northern defeats. The book ended with a discussion of the struggle in Kansas. The *Tribune* correspondent in Kansas, W.A. Phillips, kept up a constant stream of reports from Kansas. Greeley was not concerned with the accuracy of the reports, rather, merely their propaganda effect on Northern readers. The paper sponsored a Kansas fund that collected over \$20,000 for the relief of free soil settlers in Kansas. Greeley helped to make "bleeding Kansas" the backdrop to the entire campaign.³¹

The Republican campaign was largely a defense of Northern values such as free labor under assault from the South. These themes were not new in antislavery circles—they had been used by Birney in 1844, the Free Soilers in 1848, and the

Free Democrats in 1852—but now the North was finally ready to hear them. The attack was not so much against slavery as against the Slave Power and the aggressive extension of slavery.

Stump speakers portrayed an eighty-year history of Southern aggression and victories against the North starting with the three-fifths clause of the Constitution, the Missouri Compromise, the gag rule, the ban on abolitionist mail, the annexation of Texas, the Mexican War, the Compromise of 1850, and the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. Since 1815, American political parties had perceived the threats to the Republic as primarily internal and the Republicans viewed these as coming primarily from the Slave Power. Charles Dana of the *New York Tribune* argued that neither the Pope nor the foreign immigrants could rule the country, “but the slave breeders and slave traders do govern it, and threaten to put an end to all other government than theirs. Here is something tangible to go upon,” wrote Dana.³²

There was a subtone of anti-Catholicism in Republican rhetoric because there was an important nativist element in the Republican electorate and Party in the 1850s. Because Catholics were considered to be safely within the Democratic fold there was no penalty for such rhetoric. Many prominent Know Nothing leaders played an important role as stump speakers during the 1856 campaign. The Cincinnati *Catholic Telegraph* complained that “the men who threatened our churches, who burned Archbishop Bedini in effigy, whose papers are filled with calumnies the most atrocious, are now all Free soilers, Fremonters, and remarkable for the savage animosity which they manifest on all occasions against Roman Catholics.”³³

The Democrats and Fillmore Whigs attacked Fremont as inexperienced, involved in financially suspect deals in California, and a threat to the Union. Squatter miners were driven off of Fremont’s California estate by a court order, which did not help him nationally with miners. A business connected to Fremont was involved in corruption. But by far their most effective tactic was to portray Fremont as a closet Catholic. There were four pieces of true evidence to support this charge. First, his father had been a French Catholic. Second, he was educated in a Catholic school. Third, he was married by a Catholic priest. And lastly, his daughter attended a Catholic school. American Party leaders circulated the more plausible rumors against Fremont in a series of pamphlets. Ironically, Fremont, an Episcopalian, had nativist sympathies and in 1855 had been approached by several politicians urging him to run for the American Party nomination.³⁴

In 1856, many Republican speakers went out of their way to emphasize that the Republican Party was a “white man’s party” and that its antipathy to slavery was not out of sympathy to the slave but out of fear of the future enslavement of whites by the Slave Power. “The question is not, whether the negroes shall be set free . . . but whether poor white men are to be kept out of territories of the United States and trodden down and shackled in servitude,” asked the *Cincinnati Commercial* on November 3, 1856. The editor of the *Pittsburgh Gazette* summed up the issue as follows: “The real question at issue between the North and the

South in the present contest, is not a sentimental difference growing out of the oppression of the negro, but whether free settlers shall be allowed to occupy the free lands of the nation, in the enjoyment of free institutions, or be excluded from them."³⁵

The Democrats charged that the Republicans were a sectional party controlled by abolitionists that would lead to disunion. Several leading Southern Democrats threatened secession if Fremont were elected president. The Democrats ran on a platform of popular sovereignty and emphasized foreign expansion in the Caribbean in their campaign.

The Republicans defended themselves against charges of abolitionism by charging the South as being full of disloyal disunionists who were bluffing the electorate. Bailey pointed out in the pages of the *National Era* that Fremont was the only candidate who was not threatening disunion if he was not elected. Republicans played down Southern threats of disunion as "an old Southern trick." Abraham Lincoln replied to this threat when he told a crowd in Galena, Illinois on July 23, that it would be a poor president who, with control of the armed forces, would simply let the Union collapse. "We WON'T dissolve the Union, and you SHAN'T!" The Republicans condemned the Ostend Manifesto, which had been authored by Buchanan, aimed at acquiring Cuba as an American territory by purchase from Spain or by filibustering. They countered the charge of their election leading to civil war by charging that the Democrats were seeking foreign war(s) with the European colonial powers, with Mexico, and with Central America. Republicans simply avoided discussing economic policy out of fear of alienating former Democrats.³⁶

Both parties in the North competed vigorously for the German-American vote. The Republicans campaigned on the basis of free labor and free soil. The Democrats depended on the traditional allegiance of most of the immigrants to the Democratic Party and also played up Republican collusion with the Know Nothings in order to win German votes.³⁷

During 1856, the Democrats wanted to solve the Kansas problem and remove it as a campaign issue for the Republicans, whereas the latter wanted to keep it festering so they could exploit it during the campaign. On June 30, 1856, Douglas introduced a bill in the Senate to create a five-man commission to draw up a register of legal voters for Kansas and then hold an election on November 1 for a constitutional convention. The convention would then draw up a constitution for statehood. The bill was passed in the Senate in July by a vote of 33-12, but easily defeated in the House with its Republican majority. Douglas claimed in the Senate that the antislavery movement did not want pacification in Kansas until after the election.³⁸

By early fall 1856, it was apparent that Fillmore could not possibly win a majority in the electoral college even to Fillmore's managers. Many Know Nothing congressmen had already severed their ties to the Order so that even if the election were thrown into the House, this would not necessarily help their candidate.³⁹

In Pennsylvania and other states where the election looked close, the Republicans pushed to run fusion tickets with the Americans. A fusion ticket gave voters the option for voting for either of the two or more participants. Whichever party on the ticket had the most votes in the state would get the state's electoral votes, provided that the combined votes of the fusion ticket outpolled those of the straight opposition ticket. Fusion efforts failed in New Jersey as the American Party leadership feared it might harm Fillmore in the South. In Indiana, Republicans rejected a fusion ticket out of fear that it would cost them the German vote. In Illinois, the two parties simply could not come to an acceptable arrangement. Only in Pennsylvania was a fusion ticket agreed upon.⁴⁰

The Republican effort in Pennsylvania was plagued by a disorganized multitude of committees, lack of system, lack of funds, and personal feuds among the leaders. Thaddeus Stevens, long active in local politics as a Whig, Charles F. Adams, and editor Charles Dana were all critical of the local leadership. The state Republican Party had almost no money as local merchants refused to contribute.

In October the Republicans were victorious as expected in Ohio, but in Pennsylvania and Indiana the Union and People's (fusion) tickets suffered narrow defeats. This was an ominous predictor of the results for the Republicans. A number of 1852 Whig voters and Know Nothings defected to the Democrats. Most of these Know Nothings were probably former Democrats returning to their original party. The Democrats were guilty of large-scale naturalization of illegal voters—immigrants. Eventually a clerk of the Philadelphia court stood trial for issuing fraudulent naturalization papers. He admitted to printing 2,700 blank naturalization forms for the Democrats in order to allow voters to vote illegally. William Hirt, the Catholic leader of Philadelphia, disclosed on election eve that the Democrats had naturalized 6,000 voters and added 8,700 men to the assessment roles.⁴¹

Republicans had counted on victories in October to induce the Fillmore South Americans to agree to a merger on a single ticket. Sentiment for such a merger was strongest in Philadelphia and New Jersey where Republicans proposed a coalition. The South Americans were opposed in New Jersey and Illinois. Recriminations between the two parties following the People's Party loss in Indiana doomed a merger attempt.⁴²

Fillmore was completely deceived about his real prospects because of flattering reports from unscrupulous yes-men. As a result, Fillmore opposed a merger with the Republicans until it was too late to carry out and then he was indecisive. This was typical of his entire political career. The presence of the Fillmore ticket in Pennsylvania was a major obstacle to Republican victory. The South Americans were quite strong in Philadelphia. Fremont was also deluded and spent the final days of the campaign picking his cabinet. Blair remained optimistic to the end. But the Republican Party's professional leaders like Thurlow Weed, Simon Cameron, Henry Wilson, and Schuyler Colfax considered Fremont's cause to be hopeless and they labored merely to maximize the vote as a launching pad for future campaigns.⁴³

The Republicans, after much effort, managed to negotiate a fusion ticket with the Fillmore people in March 1856. Buchanan ended up winning a large plurality and a small outright majority.⁴⁴

The 1856 campaign had proved to be the most exciting and talked about presidential campaign since the 1840 “log cabin” campaign of William H. Harrison. The voting rate was 83 percent of the electorate, a 7 percent jump in absolute terms over the 1852 election and the highest participation rate of any election from 1848 to 1860. Five states (California, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, and Wisconsin) recorded their highest ever turnout during this period. The turnout in Indiana, Ohio, and Pennsylvania was even higher in November for the presidential election than it was in October for the state elections. The final electoral vote was: Buchanan 174, Fremont 114, and Fillmore 8. Buchanan carried every state in the South except Maryland and five in the North: Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Indiana, Illinois, and California. Fremont carried the nine remaining free states—all of New England, Ohio, Michigan, and Wisconsin. Fillmore received 43.9 percent of the popular vote in the South and 13.4 percent in the North. Many Northern Fillmore supporters switched to Buchanan at the last moment out of fear that Fremont might be elected. Fillmore carried more than 40 percent of the vote in 10 Southern states, much better than Scott did in 1852. According to one author, “a total change of approximately 8,000 votes from Buchanan to Fillmore in Kentucky, Tennessee, and Louisiana would have given those states to Fillmore, and no candidate would have had an electoral majority.” But Fillmore never expressed any regret over the election results.⁴⁵

One modern electoral analyst contends that Fillmore carried Maryland on the strength of the Know Nothing vote rather than on the strength of a conservative Whig vote. Fillmore lost many of the traditional Whig areas of the state and carried those areas that the American Party had carried or done well in 1855. His total share of the popular vote in Maryland was 55 percent with an 8,329 majority over Buchanan. Fillmore was considered a friend of slavery and of the South. Many Marylanders continued to vote for the American Party throughout the 1850s and voted for John Bell’s Constitutional Union Party in 1860.⁴⁶

Kentucky and Tennessee, as the two traditional Whig stronghold states in the South, were key tests for the Fillmore campaign. The Whigs had carried Kentucky in 1852 and the Americans in 1855. The Democrats argued that only by beating Fillmore could the Republicans be defeated. As a result of this argument, many Kentucky Fillmore leaders defected to the Democrats in August. The South Americans were also hopeful for a victory in Tennessee. But the Fillmore defeat in Kentucky and fear of a Fremont victory in the North led to a defeat for Fillmore in Tennessee as well.⁴⁷

In the North, only in Massachusetts did a significant number of prominent former Whigs, like Edward Everett and Robert Winthrop, support the Fillmore campaign. In Massachusetts the majority of North Americans went with Fremont.⁴⁸ Fillmore had considerable strength in his home state of New York because his Silver Gray faction defected almost intact to the Americans in 1855.

But much of the Democratic press corps came out in favor of Fremont and a Democratic Fremont convention met in Syracuse in July. After that the Republicans no longer feared a Democratic victory in New York, despite the Democratic stranglehold on New York City.⁴⁹

Political historian William Gienapp attributed the election loss to incomplete fusion between the Republicans and the Know Nothings and conservative Whigs like the Silver Grays in the North. Know Nothings were left outside of the Republican fusion coalition and many refused to vote for someone whose Protestantism they considered to be suspect. Silver Grays feared disunion. Several Southern "nationalist" fire-eaters had made disunionist threats that were believed by conservative Whigs from the Middle Atlantic States to the Upper South. Weed attributed the defeat to the failure to pick a vice president who was acceptable to the Know Nothings. Most Republicans blamed Fillmore for the loss, although their exact rationales varied. Bailey blamed the Know Nothings, which were his personal bete noire. Bailey joked that if Fremont were a sectional candidate, than Fillmore was only a "local candidate" with only the citizens of "two small states at the head of the Chesapeake Bay for his constituents."

Only in Indiana, Connecticut, and Massachusetts did Fremont win at least 75 percent of the former Whig vote. In Maine, New York, Ohio, and Illinois a majority of former Scott voters voted for Fremont, but in Pennsylvania less than half of former Whig voters voted for Fremont. The same was true in southern Indiana and southern Illinois. The percentage of 1852 Democratic voters who voted Republican in Indiana, Illinois, and Pennsylvania was quite small. In Massachusetts, Connecticut, Maine, and Ohio Democratic losses were more substantial. The Know Nothing movement "was simply a stepping-stone" for Whigs and Democrats on their way to being Republicans. George Julian referred to it as an "underground railroad" that took former Whigs and Democrats away from "their old masters."⁵⁰

In Illinois, Fremont was popular only in the northern part of the state. In central Illinois, Lincoln and Judge David Davis were the only prominent former Whigs who went for Fremont. Most of the rest of the Whigs went with either Fillmore or Buchanan. The main campaign issue in the state was Kansas.⁵¹

Fusion efforts with the Know Nothings failed in Indiana because the Republicans did not want to appear to be a new Know Nothing party. So, most Know Nothings voted for Fillmore. The Republicans feared losing both Know Nothing and German support after the Democrats won the gubernatorial race in October. Most Fremont supporters gave up on the election as hopeless.

In Ohio, the Republicans only needed to hold together the coalition that elected Chase governor in 1855 in order to win. Chase thought that in order to win, the Republicans would need the support of both antislavery Know Nothings and Germans. "The problem," he complained, "is to reconcile the two, and I see no way in which it can be done except by liberalizing the creed and declaration of the former, or by a nomination acceptable enough on each side to secure general acquiescence. Besides these classes we needs must have a large acceptance from

the Democratic element.” Most Know Nothings in Ohio followed the state delegates in defecting from the national movement. A March 1856 Know Nothing convention indicated that most North Americans in Ohio supported fusion with the Republicans. Chase campaigned for Fremont in Ohio, but McLean played no role in the campaign. A number of prominent outsiders including Cassius M. Clay of Kentucky and Anson Burlingame of Massachusetts campaigned for Fremont.⁵²

In terms of popular vote, the totals were: Buchanan 1,832,955 (45.3 percent); Fremont 1,340,537 (33.1 percent); and Fillmore 871,731 (21.6 percent). Fremont had only 1,196 votes in the South—mostly in the border states as his name was not even on the ballot in most Southern states. Fremont won a plurality of the popular vote in the North—which was astounding for a party that nationally was less than a year old.⁵³ Fillmore had 395,000 votes in the North—43.4 percent of his total but only 13.4 percent of the total vote in the North. Fillmore ran 110,000 votes ahead of Scott in the North, but he ran way behind him in the South. Buchanan had exceeded Pierce’s total in the free states by some 80,000 votes but this was not enough to offset the growth of the Republican vote over the 1852 Whig vote in the North. In 1856, Fremont had 45.2 percent of the Northern vote, compared to 41.4 percent for Buchanan and 13.4 percent for Fillmore.⁵⁴

To gain victory in four years time, the Republicans had two interrelated tasks: first, they had to finish integrating the Know Nothings into their party. They had managed to integrate the North Americans in 1856. They needed to integrate Fillmore’s 395,000 Northern voters over the next four years. They had to do this by destroying the American Party as a viable sectional party without, however, scaring off their German-American electorate that they needed for victory. The Republicans had won all three states—New York, Massachusetts, and Connecticut—where nativism was a major force and the vice-presidential choice was considered important. The American Party “obviously had no future in the North.” The American Party consisted of two separate groups: diehard nativists and pro-Union conservatives. The former would eventually join the Republicans, but the fate of the latter group was far from certain at the end of 1856.⁵⁵ Second, they needed to either win in Illinois, Indiana, and New Jersey or in Pennsylvania and one of the three other states plus hold on to what Fremont had won in 1856. The ability of various candidates to carry out these two tasks would be a crucial factor in determining who the Republican presidential nominee would be in 1860.

Kansas and John Brown

INTRODUCTION: THE IMPORTANCE OF KANSAS

Kansas became important as the first test of the popular sovereignty doctrine after the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Three different forces were in competition in Kansas. First, the proslavery South wanted to show that popular sovereignty could be used to turn Western territories into new slave states by flooding the territories with Southern immigrants. Second, Douglas and the Northern Democrats wanted to demonstrate that popular sovereignty could fairly allow the white population of a new territory to settle for itself what its policy would be on slavery. Third, the abolitionists wanted to defeat popular sovereignty and the Slave Power by flooding the state with antislavery Northern immigrants.

THE SETTLEMENT OF KANSAS

With the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act a number of important business and community leaders in Boston got together and founded the New England Emigrant Aid Company (NEEAC) in order to encourage the emigration of Yankees from New England and elsewhere in the North to Kansas so as to save the state from slavery. The idea was that of Eli Thayer, an educator, reformer, and member of the Massachusetts legislature who originated the idea in February 1854. The organization was chartered on April 26 as a public stock corporation. The board of the new corporation came from prominent Free Democrat politicians, philanthropists, and industrialists. Charles F. Adams contributed \$25,000 toward the capitalization of the new corporation. The idea was to help fund the

migration and thus enable some to migrate, which otherwise would not be possible. The migrants would then eventually pay back the loans with interest. Thayer envisioned that most of the emigrants would be Europeans, freshly arrived, and the urban poor. Thayer did not like the Garrisonians whom he considered to be fanatics and disunionists. Garrison was himself hostile to emigration schemes.

The company's first group of settlers left from Boston for Kansas on July 17, 1854 and founded Lawrence, Kansas, as the new free state center in northeastern Kansas in August 1854. A second colony of settlers was sent from Chicago to Kansas in September 1854. By the end of the year some 450 NEEAC settlers had moved to Lawrence. Included in the first group were the two men who became the political leaders of the free staters in Kansas: Samuel Pomeroy and Charles Robinson.¹

Meanwhile the proslavery side was also busy settling Kansas. The first permanent white settlement in Kansas was the proslavery town of Leavenworth, established in northeastern Kansas in June 1854. The town of Atchison, named after the proslavery Missouri senator, David Atchison, followed it the next month. Of the 2,979 free males who voted in the March 1855 territorial election—the first in Kansas history whose origins could be determined—58 percent were from slave states, 22 percent from the Midwest, 8.4 percent from the Middle Atlantic States, 6.3 percent were New Englanders, and 5 percent were foreign-born. Missourians accounted for 85 percent of the Southerners, and of these, 45 percent lived along the west bank of the Missouri River. Most of the Missourians were either supporters of Henry Clay or Thomas Hart Benton and most arrived without slaves. Slaves made up only about 2–3 percent of the population of eastern Kansas.²

Many of the free staters did not like abolitionists. As one abolitionist complained, “[T]heir free soil is free soil for white, but not for the black. They hate slavery, but they hate the negro worse.”³ Lawrence was the only major settlement in Kansas to vote against a black exclusion law when one was voted upon in 1855.⁴

Most of the free staters, like the proslavery Southerners, arrived in order to improve their economic lot in life. They figured that they were better off farming or selling their services in the West than in attempting to make a living in their previous states. Most of the free staters and Southerners had more in common with each other than they did with either the abolitionists or with the proslavery leadership in Kansas. This made reconciliation easier than it would have seemed in 1855 or 1856.

BLEEDING KANSAS

Mistrust of the fairness of elections led the free staters to boycott the elections called for by the proslavery side and set up their own set of parallel institutions.

In the first territorial election on March 30, 1855, there were thousands of Missourians or “border ruffians” who crossed the border to illegally vote in the election. A later congressional investigation showed that all but 500 of the 5,427 proslavery votes counted, had been cast illegally. There was no killing during this first election—but plenty of intimidation and illegal vote counting. “We had at least 7,000 [Missouri] men in the territory on the day of the election,” admitted Missouri Senator David Atchison to Virginia Senator Hunter. “We are playing for a mighty stake . . . [and] the game must be played boldly.”⁵

As a result, free state leaders met in Topeka in October–November 1855 and wrote their own free state constitution that was approved by a referendum in December, 1,731 votes to 46. In March 1856 they elected their own legislature and chose Charles Robinson as their governor.⁶ Kansas was actually governed legally by a series of territorial governors appointed by President Pierce and then President Buchanan. None of them lasted very long as they were either unable to deal with the turmoil and chicanery of the two competing sides or they were undermined back in Washington.

The first such governor was Andrew Reeder, appointed in November 1854. Reeder threw out the election results in a third of the districts and ordered new elections there that ended up electing free state delegates. But when the new territorial legislature met in Pawnee City, Kansas, in July, it seated the original winners. Reeder was threatened with death by the border ruffians during the election. Reeder traveled east to Washington to complain to Pierce and asked him to intervene. Pierce pretended to sympathize with him. But then at the urging of Senator Atchison, he had Reeder replaced by the former Hunker governor of Ohio, Wilson Shannon.⁷

The free staters then began arming with the aid of the abolitionists. The NEEAC purchased 200 Sharp’s repeating rifles and sent them down to Robinson to be used in the defense of settlements. By the end of the year, a total of 325 rifles had been sent by the NEEAC along with two small field artillery pieces. Also the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher, a famous abolitionist preacher from New York City, began collecting money to arm the settlers. He sent so many of the Sharp’s rifles that they became known euphemistically as “Beecher’s Bibles.” Colonel Jefferson Buford of Alabama spent \$20,000 to equip an expedition of 300 armed men to Kansas.⁸

Shannon was less scrupulous about upholding fairness than Reeder. Shannon oversaw a period of major fighting referred to as “Bleeding Kansas” that lasted from late May 1856 to mid-September when it was ended by Shannon’s replacement, John Geary. The first major confrontation between the two sides, the so-called Wakarusa War, occurred in late November 1855. This was an armed standoff between a force of 1,200 ruffians and the free staters in Lawrence. James H. Lane, a former Democratic congressman from Indiana and a Mexican War colonel, served as the commander of the free state forces. With the aid of Governor Shannon, who rushed to Lawrence, he managed to negotiate a truce and fighting ceased.⁹

Among the early Northern immigrants in 1855 were the five sons of John Brown, a failed businessman and farmer who lived most of his life in New York and Ohio. John Brown, Sr., was an abolitionist since 1834 who was acquainted with Frederick Douglass and Gerrit Smith. He had been a settler on Gerrit Smith's large homestead project for blacks, New Elba. During 1855, the sons wrote home to their father and invited him to settle in Kansas. Brown, who had failed at every business venture in his life, was more than happy to comply.

Brown arrived in Kansas with his wife in late October 1855. He staked a claim along the Pottawatomie Creek near Osawatimie, which he never bothered to register. Brown only stayed in Kansas for about a year, but during this time he earned himself notoriety by carrying out the most infamous massacre of the Bleeding Kansas period. Brown was essentially a Northern border ruffian. Brown's occupation for the last four years of his life was as a professional "freedom fighter" or terrorist in and for Kansas.

Brown reported to Lawrence at the end of the first week in December. He was given command of a "company" of volunteers—about 20 men—with the title of captain. Brown was a very ill-disciplined officer with no respect for formal authority. Brown's oldest son, John, Jr. commanded a volunteer militia unit, the Pottawatomie Rifles, during the Sack of Lawrence in May 1856. Brown, Sr. was a member of this unit. The unit arrived too late to participate in the defense of Lawrence. So Brown, Sr. took out his frustration by taking seven members of the Rifles, including four of his sons and a son-in-law, and heading off on his own. He equipped the men with broadswords—probably either homemade or surplus artillery dress swords—that he honed to a razor's edge. He then took them along the Pottawatomie Creek during the night of May 24. Along the creek they stopped at two cabins of known proslavery residents and Brown woke up the residents and forced the adult males outside and the party massacred them—five in all. This became known in history as the Pottawatomie Massacre.¹⁰

The Pottawatomie Massacre caused the return of the border ruffians from Missouri and kicked off a period of civil war that lasted for four months. Jim Lane became the top commander of the free state militia, which he called the Northern Army—in reality a force of several hundred ill-disciplined men. Brown and his four younger sons formed their own gang of cattle thieves and spent the late spring and summer of 1856 rustling cattle from proslavery settlers.

On May 31, 1856, arrest warrants were issued for John Brown and his four sons and three companions for the murders. Both James Redpath and William A. Phillips, the very partisan journalists of the *New York Tribune* and *New York Times* respectively, made their way to Brown's camp and interviewed him. They along with Richard Hinton of the *Boston Traveller* and the *Chicago Tribune*, and Richard H. Kagi of the *New York Post* created Brown as a public celebrity and persona. Phillips's book, *The Conquest of Kansas by Missouri and Her Allies*, appeared in Boston in the early fall of 1856. By the time Brown left Kansas in mid-October 1856, he was a celebrity in the East.¹¹

During the summer of 1856, Brown held no formal free state command. He was one of a number of freebooter commanders who raided the area south of Osawatomie in southeastern Kansas. Brown did fight in one major battle when about 250 Southern raiders attacked Osawatomie in early September 1856. One of Brown's sons, Frederick, was killed during the battle. Brown started making cryptic statements about his personal role in the war against slavery as he strutted around Lawrence. One day in Lawrence, Brown was heard to say that he was "the angel of death." Many people thought that he was simply insane.¹²

John Geary, a veteran of the Mexican War and the first American mayor of San Francisco, was appointed governor to replace Wilson Shannon. Shannon had negotiated a truce and prisoner exchange in August 1856 but it soon broke down. Lane invaded Kansas with his Northern Army from Iowa and captured several proslavery strongholds and then withdrew to the Nebraska border. Shannon resigned on August 18. Geary arrived in Kansas on September 9, 1856. He used federal troops and his imposing physical presence—he was six foot five inches tall—to command respect. Geary succeeded in pacifying the territory in about a month's time and on October 10 declared it to be in a state of peace. Geary was on good personal terms with both Charles Robinson and Samuel Pomeroy.¹³

There were only to be two more major incidents of violence during the 1850s. In May 1858 on the second anniversary of the Pottawatomie Massacre border ruffians shot five dead and wounded several others. This went down in local history as the Marais des Cygnes Massacre. On December 20, 1858, Brown carried out a raid into Missouri in which he killed one man, stole several horses and a wagon, and liberated eleven slaves who were spirited away to Canada. Brown's "noble" deeds were contrasted with those of Charles Hamilton of the Marais massacre in the Northern press. What few realized was that Hamilton was driven off of his land claim by James Montgomery, a confederate of Brown who raided with him.¹⁴

GOVERNOR WALKER AND LECOMPTON

From October 1856 until 1859, Kansas was primarily a political problem fought out in the halls of Congress in Washington, rather than a military problem. Geary resigned as governor on the last day of the Pierce administration. The Buchanan administration also refused to honor Geary's agreement with Robinson for statehood. Geary had been the third and most successful governor appointed by Pierce. President Buchanan appointed an ambitious senior Democrat from Pennsylvania, Robert J. Walker, who had been a slaveholder in Mississippi for years. In appointing Walker governor, Buchanan promised him a free hand in reaching a solution in Kansas.¹⁵

The "bogus legislature" remained in place and recognized as the *de facto* government of Kansas even by free staters. Late in the spring of 1857 Senator Atchison advised a friend from South Carolina that it was futile to raise money for

Kansas as the territory was a lost cause for the South. Conceivably with the election over, the fighting ended, and the South's leading partisan conceding defeat, it would be easier for the new administration to come up with a solution. A Pennsylvania Democrat warned Attorney General Black that if something was not done about Kansas, the Democrats would lose his state and would be in "imminent danger" of losing the entire North.¹⁶

Walker wanted to ensure that he had the full support of the new administration behind him. So he wrote a letter of understanding to Buchanan. Secretary of State Lewis Cass wrote back, writing for Buchanan, on March 30, 1857, that "the people of Kansas have the right to be protected in the peaceful election of delegates for such a purposeWhen [the] constitution shall be submitted to the people of the territory, they must be protected in the exercise of their right of voting for or against that instrument, and the fair expression of the popular will must not be interrupted by fraud or violence." The Democratic press, North and South, supported Walker's appointment, whereas most of the Republican press had a negative reaction, based on the fact that Walker was a slaveholder.¹⁷ Walker decided to tread very carefully by not disturbing the free state legislature in Topeka as long as it did not attempt to govern and to recognize the Lecompton legislature as the legal legislature. Walker had both Buchanan—in Washington before he left—and Douglas—in Chicago en route to Kansas—read his inaugural address and approve it. Walker wanted to ensure that he had the Democratic Party behind him.¹⁸

Walker used his inaugural address to urge free staters to vote and pledged to see that the election was fair. Walker planned to divorce the National Democracy, as Buchanan soon began referring to his wing of the party, from proslavery Democrats in Kansas so as to mitigate the damage to the party and save the Northern wing of the party. Free staters, however, remained wary of Walker and continued to mistrust him. The free staters boycotted the election of delegates to a constitutional convention held in June 1857. Some 1800 proslavery voters elected 60 delegates. This was less than 10 percent of the potential electorate that voted. This constitutional convention met in October in Lecompton, one of the farthest west settlements in Kansas at the time, and the constitution that it wrote became known to history as the Lecompton constitution. Fifteen counties in Kansas had no delegates to the convention.

The constitution that the 60 delegates wrote, called for existing slaves to be legal in perpetuity and then gave Kansas the choice between a constitution with slavery and one without—but with existing slaves legal. The convention also voted to oust Walker as of December 1, 1857.¹⁹

By the summer of 1857, the Southern press was calling for Walker's recall as governor, but the Buchanan administration reassured him that he had their support. Elections for a territorial legislature were held on October 5–6, 1857. There was massive fraud. Walker ended up throwing out the results from two electoral districts where blatant fraud could be established. This action was popular with the free staters but not with the proslavery forces or the South.²⁰

In November 1857, the Buchanan administration signaled its support of the Lecompton constitution with an article by Attorney General Jeremiah Black in the Washington *Union* newspaper that functioned as the administration mouthpiece. Walker took personal leave in November to take care of some business in Pennsylvania and on the way he stopped off in Washington. While there, he had a joint briefing with Buchanan and the cabinet on November 26. He told them that support for the Lecompton constitution would result in renewed warfare in Kansas. Walker also met with Douglas in Chicago on his way east and the two agreed to together resist administration support for Lecompton.²¹

Some historians speculate that it was Southern pressure and Buchanan's weak will that led to the change. Others put it down to Buchanan's legalism and his reading of the facts in Kansas. The free staters had chosen to boycott the legal elections to the constitutional convention in Lecompton, thereby depriving themselves of legal standing in the dispute. Buchanan was always basically proslavery as witnessed by his support for the Ostend Manifesto in 1854 to acquire Cuba as slave territory for the South. Therefore, he probably did not need very much pushing by the South.²²

A referendum on the constitution was scheduled for December 21, 1857 with the voters given a choice between "Constitution with slavery" or "Constitution with no slavery" but no chance to reject the constitution itself. The free state *Herald of Freedom* declared that "Abolitionists, Free Soilers, and Moderate Pro-Slavery men are united in a common cause against Border Ruffian usurpation." The Republican press condemned Lecompton without reservation.²³

Douglas was in a very tough position. His Senate seat (the legislature that would nominate him) was up for reelection next year and to go along with the administration could cost him his seat. Douglas was receiving mail from Democrats all over the North urging him to act against Lecompton. But if Douglas openly challenged the administration, at best the Democratic Party would be split in two along sectional lines. At worst, it would be split in two along political lines with many Northern Democrats siding with Buchanan. Douglas could either take a risk and preserve his political future or go along with the administration and hope for some high level patronage appointment. Douglas arrived in Washington, late on December 2, 1857, and met with Buchanan at the White House the following day. Buchanan reminded Douglas of the fate of Senators Tallmadge and Rives who had been expelled from the party for crossing Jackson. Douglas replied indignantly, "Mr. President, I wish you to remember that General Jackson is dead, sir." He then stormed out of the meeting after having made his declaration of war on the administration.²⁴ Douglas felt no gratitude toward Buchanan—he had loyally campaigned for the nominee's election, but Buchanan had repaid him by disposing of the patronage for the Midwest without consulting Douglas.²⁵

In November 1857, James Sheahan, editor of the *Chicago Times*, announced in his paper that Douglas would make his stand against the Lecompton constitution and the Buchanan administration. Lincoln advised members of his own party

to stay out of the intra-Democratic squabble. Douglas met with Seward, who was visiting Chicago, on October 22. He also met with Weed and Horace Greeley. Douglas wanted to lure Republicans who were former Democrats back into their old party as a means of building up a coalition that could take on Buchanan. Republicans were afraid that he might succeed and thereby deprive them of a crucial part of their electorate needed for victory in 1860. An Illinois Republican wrote, "We are looking for fun in Congress early in the session."²⁶

On December 9, 1857, Douglas made his first public speech on Lecompton. In it he spoke against the constitution as they were required to vote for the constitution in order to vote on the slavery question. His modern biographer considered this speech to be "probably the most significant of his career" and it was received "with pain on one side and with rapturous applause on the other."²⁷

Over the next week, Douglas met in Washington with a number of leading Republicans including Greeley, Wade, and Banks. The Republicans all wanted to cooperate with Douglas on an attack on the Buchanan administration. Douglas had no intention of leaving his party, but he might have been attempting to recruit free soil Republicans back into his own party.²⁸

On January 4, 1858, in a second referendum sponsored by the newly elected legislature, after the widespread fraud in the first, Kansas voters rejected the Lecompton constitution by 10,104 votes after they were given a no option. Buchanan removed acting governor Frederick Stanton and replaced him with James Denver, the territory's commissioner of Indian Affairs.²⁹

The administration was now faced with the task of squaring the new opposing results and was split on the decision. In December 1857, the House consisted of 128 Democrats (75 Southern, 53 Northern), 14 Whig-Americans, and 92 Republicans. Douglas tended to have more support the farther west one went, with the opposite being true for Buchanan. The Buchanan administration began to wield the patronage weapon in a bid to force the dissidents into line with prominent postmasters in Chicago, Columbus, and Cleveland being fired. The balance in the House was very close with 92 Republicans and about 25 Northern Democrats opposed to Lecompton versus 75 Southern Democrats and about 30 Northern Democrats in favor. On March 4, 1858, Senator James H. Hammond of South Carolina gave his famous King Cotton speech to the Senate. "No, you dare not make war on cotton. No power on earth dares make war on it. Cotton is king."³⁰

During March, Douglas was quite sick from a combination of overwork, heavy drinking, and tuberculosis. He was absent from the Senate for two weeks. It was the first real sign of the illness that would cause his premature death in the summer of 1861. On April 1, 1858, 22 anti-Lecompton Democrats and six Whig-Americans joined with the Republicans to pass a bill that required an honest vote in Kansas before Kansas would be admitted as a new state. The Senate had previously voted to admit Kansas as a slave state 33 to 25. On April 30, the House and Senate passed the English bill, a compromise measure, by a vote of 112-103 in the House and 31-22 in the Senate. On August 2, 1858,

the people of Kansas voted 11,300 to 1,788 against statehood under the Lecompton constitution. As a penalty for rejecting the Lecompton constitution, the territory would have to wait until it had a minimum of 90,000 residents for statehood. Kansas was not admitted as a state until January 1861 when the absence of delegates from the Deep South gave the Republicans an artificial majority.³¹

The year 1857 was the height of the South's national political power, the height of the Slave Power with the Dred Scott decision and inauguration of Buchanan in March. The defeat of the Lecompton constitution was the South's first major defeat and the first major victory for the North. Buchanan lost control of the Democratic Party in his home state and Senator Jesse Bright lost control of Indiana. The Lecompton controversy reversed Douglas's traditional base of support.³²

Billy Herndon later charged that Greeley, Seward, and Weed had made a deal with Douglas under which they would support the latter's reelection to the Senate and he would support Seward's election in 1860. Herndon, however, was not aware that the "political firm of Seward, Weed, and Greeley" had disbanded a few years before. In 1860, Greeley would demonstrate his animus against Seward and desire for revenge for perceived slights. Buchanan supporters made similar charges of a Douglas-Seward alliance.³³

THE CONSPIRACY OF THE SECRET SIX AND JOHN BROWN

In Boston the Kansas Aid Committee consisted of six prominent abolitionists, several of whom were independently wealthy. The six were George Luther Stearns, a prominent pipe manufacturer; Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe, a prominent reformer for the blind and handicapped and a Free Soiler; Franklin Sanborn, a writer and school teacher who inherited a fortune through his late wife; the Rev. Theodore Parker, a prominent abolitionist and Unitarian clergyman; the Rev. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, a famous missionary in West Africa and another Unitarian; and Gerrit Smith, the former congressman and leader of the Radical Abolitionist Party. Of these six, only Smith had directly held political power, and not very much of it. But three of the others (Howe, Sanborn, and Stearns) were members of the Bird Club. The Bird Club was a collection of prominent political abolitionists and Free Soilers founded about 1850 by paper manufacturer Francis Bird to discuss political strategy for first the Free Soil Party and then the Republican Party in Massachusetts. The group met every Saturday afternoon at a prominent restaurant for lunch and discussion. Howe had been a member since the beginning, but Sanborn and Stearns were relatively new members in 1856.³⁴

Higginson was personally very involved with Kansas having traveled to the territory to meet with free state leaders. In September 1856, he traveled to Nebraska City, Iowa—a border city—and met with Jim Lane. He later denied meeting with Brown at this time.³⁵

The following month Brown stopped off to see Governor Chase in Columbus and after showing him a letter of introduction from Charles Robinson—which the latter gave as the price for getting Brown out of the territory—gave Brown a rather guarded letter of introduction and \$25. Theodore Parker hosted a reception for Brown at his home in Boston that was attended by both Wendell Phillips and his ally Garrison. On January 7, 1857, the Massachusetts Kansas Aid Committee met with George Luther Stearns, the pipe manufacturer, as chairman and Sanborn as secretary. They voted to give Brown 200 Sharp's rifles and 31,000 percussion caps for the rifles that were stored in the cellar of a Mr. Todd in Tabor, Iowa, for use in Kansas.³⁶

Colonel Hugh Forbes, a British soldier of fortune, who worked as a translator at the *Tribune*, was introduced to Brown at the Disunion Convention in Boston on January 15, 1857. The convention was presided over by Frank Bird and Garrison. Forbes would later work drilling Brown's recruits for his "Northern Army" that would invade Harper's Ferry as well as writing manuals and attempting to instruct Brown in the principles of guerrilla warfare. A week after this meeting, Brown appeared before the National Kansas Aid Committee and discussed his plans to raise his antislavery unit for use in Kansas. Brown refused to reveal his plans in detail.³⁷ He may not have actually had any concrete plans at that time and simply wanted to cover that fact up.

He also appeared as a witness before the Massachusetts state legislature in an attempt to raise \$100,000 to arm and equip a company of volunteers to serve in Kansas, but it was not sympathetic to his plans. Brown stayed as a guest of Transcendentalist philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson at a farmhouse next to Emerson's home in Boston. He talked for hours with Emerson and his friend Henry D. Thoreau. He later also stayed as a guest at the home of Thoreau. Brown seemed to fit high society's image of the man of action. He always insisted on being referred to as "Captain Brown" although he had only held that rank for a couple of weeks.³⁸

For the thirty months between January 1857 and June 1859, Brown spent about half of his time traveling around attempting to raise money. He made seven trips to Boston and five trips to Petersboro, New York to see Gerrit Smith.³⁹ Now he became a professional fundraiser and revolutionary. Colonel Forbes quickly discerned that Brown had "a bigoted mind and limited instruction" and "was not truthful." Brown also neglected to pay Forbes the salary promised him for his services as a military instructor of Brown's recruits and for writing a military manual on guerrilla warfare for Brown. Forbes split from Brown on November 2, 1857.⁴⁰

After settling his nine followers into winter headquarters in Iowa, Brown returned east and stopped off to visit Frederick Douglass at his home in Rochester, New York. Brown had first met Douglass in 1848. While there, a decade later, Brown began drawing up his plans for a series of forts connected by secret tunnels in the mountains. He drew these with a drawing compass that he

borrowed from Douglass. He also began work on the constitution for his provisional government that he intended to set up during his slave revolt.⁴¹

On Washington's Birthday, February 22, 1858, Sanborn and Smith discussed Brown's plan for a guerrilla campaign in the mountains of Virginia outside of Smith's home in Petersboro. It was the first time that any of the Secret Six had actually discussed what eventually became the Harper's Ferry raid. They both had large doubts about the feasibility of the project but were convinced that Brown would go through with it no matter what they decided.⁴²

The Secret Six, minus Smith, met with Brown on March 5, 1858 in the American House hotel in Boston. They agreed to the initial financing for the plan. In early June 1858, Brown was given \$500 by the Secret Six in Boston and told to return to Kansas. It was the first large sum of money that Brown received from the group.⁴³

Brown returned to Kansas for the final time and was involved in small-scale activity. On December 20, 1858, he raided a farm in Missouri, killed one man, stole a wagon and some livestock, and liberated eleven slaves. Brown then whisked the slaves away to Ontario, Canada. One of the slaves later joined Brown in the Harper's Ferry raid. Missouri put a reward of \$3,000 on the head of Brown and Buchanan added another \$250 of his own money. The Missouri raid was the last action in the Kansas area and Brown's best planned and executed piece of work.⁴⁴

Brown spent another three and a half months fundraising and then went to Maryland and rented a farmhouse about five miles from Harper's Ferry. At this point, Brown had four blacks and twenty whites, including three of his sons, and the others were all quite young. These 24 were his entire "Northern Army" that he proposed to set off a slave rebellion with.⁴⁵ Brown had planned on carrying out the raid in the summer but his plans were thrown off by Forbes approaching Senators Seward, in person, and Wilson, by letter, and warning them of what he knew of Brown's plans. Wilson warned Howe who warned Brown.⁴⁶

On the evening of October 16, 1859, Brown set off from the Kennedy farmhouse with all but three of his men. They were accompanied by a wagon full of arms—rifles and pikes. Brown had commissioned a blacksmith in Ohio to make a thousand pikes made by putting Bowie knife blades on the end of poles. The idea was to arm slaves who had no idea how to use firearms. On October 18, an assault by Lieutenant J.E.B. Stuart and a platoon of Marines captured Brown; one marine and two of Brown's men were killed in the assault. Brown's force had killed four people and wounded nine while losing ten dead or dying, five who fled on October 17, and seven were captured.

After three months of preparation, Brown had marched off on his adventure without taking any food for his "soldiers" next meal. As Abraham Lincoln said at Coopers Union four months later, "It was not a slave insurrection. It was an attempt by white men to get up a revolt among slaves, in which the slaves refused to participate. In fact, it was so absurd that the slaves, with all their ignorance, saw

plainly enough it could not succeed.”⁴⁷ Brown had two sons killed at Harper’s Ferry and would have been killed himself if the ceremonial sword of the officer capturing him had not broke against a button on Brown’s coat. Brown was taken away to nearby Charleston and indicted by a grand jury that coincidentally happened to be in session. He was secured in the local jail awaiting trial. Virginia was determined to try him as quickly as possible and then hang him.⁴⁸

Based on the evidence left by Brown at the farmhouse, details on the conspiracy of the Secret Six were published in the *New York Herald* within two years of Forbes first threatening to do so. Gerrit Smith destroyed all letters from Brown and any evidence of a personal connection with Brown that he could find. But a \$100 check from Smith to Brown from the Bank of Albany was found in Brown’s pocket when he was captured. Smith then had a nervous breakdown and was committed by his family to the State Asylum for the Insane at Utica, New York. Smith spent a month at the insane asylum and was released on December 29, 1859. He was unable to write again until May 1860. Sanborn also destroyed all evidence linking him to Brown. Sanborn, Stearns, and Frederick Douglass all fled temporarily to Canada. John Andrews, who within a year would be elected governor, served as George L. Stearns’s legal advisor. Andrews argued that if the Secret Six were indicted by Virginia they should be tried in Massachusetts—as the crime occurred there. None of the Secret Six was ever indicted, arrested, or tried for participation in the conspiracy.⁴⁹

Of the Six, Smith was the one most affected by the failure of the raid and his participation in it. Smith was the only conspirator to repent of his participation in the raid. He renounced violence and returned to his previous pacifism.⁵⁰

Congress held hearings on the Harper’s Ferry raid that began in mid-December 1859 and lasted for six months. Stearns and Howe were called to testify and both perjured themselves in their testimony, as did Senators Seward and Wilson according to author Otto Scott. Smith said he was willing to testify if his doctors agreed—they did not. Parker died in Italy in May 1860. Higginson, Stearns, and Howe went on to play important roles during the secession crisis and Civil War.⁵¹

Brown, having now failed as a revolutionary as he had failed at everything else in his life, realized that he had a chance to succeed as a symbol and a martyr. Brown impressed his jailer and many spectators at his execution by his calm dignified demeanor throughout the trial and as he was hanged on December 2, 1859. His final legacy was his prophecy that “the crimes of this guilty, land: will never be purged away; but with Blood.” He wrote this one the morning of his execution. It is now engraved on the visitor’s site museum at Harper’s Ferry.⁵²

John Brown’s Harper’s Ferry raid did have a major effect on Southern opinion. Within six weeks of the raid, reports of the Secret Six involvement and of Northern praise for Brown had convinced the South, or at least the planter and professional classes that mattered, that the North was the enemy of the South. Now, with the Harper’s Ferry raid and Secret Six conspiracy, the abolitionist peril had come together with that of slave conspiracies. Southern propagandists had

attempted to blame the Nat Turner revolt of 1831 on the first appearance of Garrison's *The Liberator* eight months before.⁵³ Now they had a much more concrete connection.

Immense memorial meetings took place after Brown's execution on December 2, 1859 in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia and smaller meetings took place throughout New England, New York, and Ohio. Some have claimed that it was the greatest national display of grief in the North ever. Black mourners in Philadelphia mobbed Brown's coffin on its way northward to New Elba, New York. His grave became a new pilgrimage site for abolitionist mourners. But certainly it would have been the largest since the death of John Adams in 1826 if not since Washington's death a generation before that.⁵⁴

The Northern intelligentsia, led by Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau as well as Garrison and Phillips, could not praise Brown's moral character sufficiently. Brown's actions were repudiated by both Seward and Lincoln as well as by more conservative Republican figures.⁵⁵ But a South that saw all antislavery opinion as being of one shade of black did not attempt to distinguish the Radical Abolitionists of Smith and the Bird Club, and the moderate Republicans.

Kansas was important to the antislavery struggle and antislavery politics for three principal reasons: First, it served as a test of the South's and the Democracy's sincerity in implementing the policy of popular sovereignty. The South failed the test and most of the Democratic Party did as well. Second, it served to split the Democratic Party and alienate Douglas from the South. Third, it managed to entangle the abolitionist cause with John Brown and his criminality and impractical terrorism. By chance, the Secret Six turned out to be the most practical of all of the political abolitionists.

Republican Consolidation, 1857–60

INTRODUCTION

The Northern and national political system began to change from 1856 to 1860 in several ways. First, the American Party ceased to be a national party and survived in only a few isolated states at the state level. Its last national convention was in July 1857, two years after its first convention, and it devolved all decision-making power to the state councils. Second, in the summer of 1857 a financial panic or depression occurred that was the worst since that of 1837. This had the effect of tying some immigrants even closer to the Democratic Party as a source of jobs, but of causing a natural reaction against the incumbent party by native-born Americans. The depression helped to lead to another major religious awakening during 1857–58 equivalent to the one that occurred in the 1820s. Religious awakenings had always proved useful to the antislavery cause. Third, the Dred Scott decision of March 1857 further strengthened the feeling among Northerners that they were under assault by a conspiracy in government by the Slave Power. Fourth, the Lecompton constitution and the support of the Buchanan administration for it split the Democratic Party both along sectional lines and along ideological lines within the North. This also caused a backlash among voters in the North and helped Republicans regain control of Congress in 1858.

In the middle of this consolidation, the Republican Party had a strategic decision to make as to what policy to adopt toward Stephen Douglas and his Northern Democratic supporters. Should they form an alliance with Douglas at the expense of Lincoln in Illinois? Or should they back Lincoln and attempt to keep Douglas from winning reelection to the Senate in 1859?

The Lincoln-Douglas debates of the summer-fall of 1858 marked the emergence of Lincoln as a national figure. And it set the stage for Lincoln's challenge to Seward for the nomination in 1860. This chapter will deal with all of these issues in chronological order.

THE DRED SCOTT DECISION

Two days after the inauguration of President James Buchanan, the Supreme Court of the United States handed down a 7-2 decision against Dred Scott, a Missouri slave who was suing for his freedom. Scott had followed his master to Fort Snelling in what was then the Wisconsin Territory and is today part of downtown Minneapolis, Minnesota. Scott sued for his freedom on the grounds that he had been free in the North. Two lawyers ably represented him: George Curtis, brother of one of the justices and Frank Blair, the leader of a faction of the Missouri Republican Party. There was judicial precedent for simply ruling that Missouri law had precedence over the laws of other states regarding personal status of blacks. But Chief Justice Roger Taney was determined to make the decision as wide as possible in its scope.

The Taney Court consisted of seven Southerners and two Northerners. The Southerners could be counted on to render a verdict that would rule against Scott, but different justices would do so on different grounds—as would be the case in another controversial Supreme Court decision some three-quarters of a century later. The two Northern members, Benjamin Curtis and John McLean had widely been reported as indicating that they would write a minority dissent based on the Missouri Compromise. Taney felt that it was necessary to destroy any ambiguity in regard to the Missouri Compromise so as to end the sectional tension that had been stirred up by the repeal of the Compromise three years earlier under the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Taney, writing for the majority, ruled that the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional because Congress had no authority to restrict slavery in the territories. This was argued on the grounds that it violated the “due process” clause of the Constitution by depriving a slaveholder of his property without due process. This was essentially the Southern Slave Power reading of the constitution: any restrictions on slavery in common areas were invalid because they violated the Southern view of blacks as human property equal to any other type of property in its portability. By keeping slavery out of an area, Northerners were not in fact depriving a slaveholder of his property, but merely denying its portability. Taney's argument is the equivalent to arguing that one cannot ban food or drink from a library or firearms from a courtroom without being guilty of depriving the owners of those items of their property. In essence, this was the beginning of a bid by the Court to overturn any restrictions on slavery. This argument overlooked the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 that banned slavery from the Northwest Territory (today Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, and Wisconsin) during the lifetime of the Founding Fathers.

Somehow they failed to see that this was a denial of due process. This was the final part of the Dred Scott decision.

Earlier in the decision, Taney ruled that Dred Scott had no standing to sue in federal court because as a Negro he was not a citizen. Ignoring much of Northern history, Taney argued that Negroes had never been accepted as citizens. Taney infamously argued that “[t]hey [Negroes] had for more than a century been regarded as beings of an inferior order . . . so far inferior that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect.” Taney ignored the fact that blacks had been recognized as the citizens of several different states and thus were entitled to the legal recognition from the other states that they enjoyed in their own. Taney argued that since blacks were not citizens by birth and had never been naturalized they were not citizens.

Instead of carefully making a decision based on the facts and ruling that in Missouri blacks were not citizens and therefore could not sue, Taney was intent on creating law by nationalizing the situation in the slave states and ignoring eighty years of Northern legal history in the process. He could have argued that by returning to Missouri, Scott reverted to his prior status as a slave. But Taney was not interested in merely relying on precedent. He had been empowered by Buchanan and the Democratic Party to find a legal solution to the sectional problem so that Congress could avoid having to find a political solution. Logically, if Scott had no standing to sue, the situation was mute and the Court had no standing to rule on whether or not the Missouri Compromise was constitutional or not. But because the Supreme Court under Taney was determined to find a legal “solution” to the sectional controversy over slavery, Taney and the Court overlooked this basic legal doctrine that the Court always had to have an actual case before it could rule. This meant that this final ruling could be treated as *obiter dicta* or side comments with no legal force. This has become the standard legal treatment of the case over time since it was originally written.¹

Reactions to the verdict varied. The Republican Party generally deplored the logic of the ruling and saw it as further evidence of the existence of a conspiracy between the executive and judicial branches of the government. This in turn was interpreted as further evidence for the existence of a Slave Power that controlled the government through the Democrats. The Republicans, because of their reverence for the law, never advocated ignoring the decision but rather that the proper remedy was to elect a Republican president who would appoint justices who would in time overturn the decision. This in many ways mirrors the attitude of the Republican Party toward the *Roe v. Wade* decision of January 1973 more than thirty years since that decision was made. Because of the Civil War, the Dred Scott decision would be in effect for little over eight years before it was rendered void by the Thirteenth amendment to the Constitution.

The Democrats played upon popular reverence for the Supreme Court and its decisions. Pronouncements in the Democratic press, especially in the Southern press, were full of praise for the sagacity of the Court and its decision. Douglas and the Northern Democrats were in a quandary. On the face of it, the decision

seemed to invalidate the doctrine of popular sovereignty by prohibiting any restrictions on slavery in the territories until the actual vote on statehood occurred. Douglas got around this by what eventually became known as the Freeport Doctrine, where he argued it during the Lincoln-Douglas debates in the summer of 1858. Douglas argued that although in theory slaveholders could bring their slaves into any territory, in practice they were dependent upon local opinion to enact police regulations and laws that would protect their property. In other words, Douglas was arguing for legal conformity with the Supreme Court while sabotaging the decision in practice. But Douglas did not really make this argument until after he had split with the Buchanan administration over Lecompton.

By the summer of 1858, there were essentially three different opinions toward the Dred Scott decision within the two main parties. The Republicans saw it as evidence of a conspiracy among all elements of the Democratic Party and the justices that they had appointed to the Court. Douglas embraced the view of a conspiracy, but did not include himself and his supporters among the ranks of the conspirators. And the Buchanan administration was intent on demonstrating that there was a conspiracy by attempting to destroy politically all those who spoke of one.

The main political effect of the decision was to quicken the ripening in the North for the elevation to power of a sectional antislavery party. Being told that the “sacred covenant” between the two sections that had been repealed by one of them had never been legal had outraged Republicans all over again. Many Republicans logically feared a day when the Supreme Court would attempt to invalidate the free status of the North and make slavery legal anywhere. Many Northerners saw a South that was determined to shove slavery down their throats by means of a Southern-dominated Supreme Court.

THE PANIC OF 1857

In the summer of 1857, a financial panic or depression occurred due to a number of causes. First, was the end of the Crimean War and European demand for American wheat. And second, a shortage of gold and silver coins—specie—partly caused by the sinking of the steamship *Central America* with \$1,600,000 in specie from California on board in mid-September. The Buchanan administration attempted to intervene to correct the problem by ordering the minting of new gold coins. The problem was temporarily corrected, but in October grew worse. On October 13, eighteen New York banks suspended operations and the same night, the remaining banks agreed not to open the next day. The panic soon spread to Boston and a chain reaction followed. Railroads, manufacturers, merchants, and banks all collapsed as a loss of business prevented them from paying their debts. Thousands lost their jobs in the large cities of the Northeast. The depression was largely confined to the North—especially the Northeast—and was very

mild in the South due to its agrarian base. To Southerners, this was additional proof of the superiority of the Southern way of life.²

The depression was most severe in New York City where thousands were unemployed and relief agencies were overtaxed. On November 10, 1857, soldiers and marines were sent to guard the U.S. Custom House to protect crowds of desperate unemployed from breaking in and stealing the \$20 million kept on reserve there. General Winfield Scott commanded the troops. New York banks resumed specie payments in December and the rest of the nation's banking system had recovered by the spring of 1858. "There was never a more severe crisis nor a more rapid recovery," commented the *London Economist*.³

But the localized effects of the panic were not susceptible to exploitation by state parties. Support or opposition to tariffs, internal improvements, and other economic policies tended to be much more geographically based than party based. In 1858, the Republicans made tariff revision a major plank of their platforms in Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. Southern domination of the Democratic Party prevented the Democrats from making internal improvements and this became another issue for the Republicans. The panic ended up being a net liability for the Democrats.⁴

In 1858, Republicans in Congress proposed three measures to win support among the working class, especially in the Midwest. First, was the homestead bill of 1858 to offer free federal land grants to settlers moving to the West. Second, a Pacific railroad bill was introduced to demonstrate that Republicans cared as much about railroads as Douglas did. Third, a bill was introduced offering free land grants to states to found public agricultural and mechanical colleges—the origins of America's public university system. The hope was that these measures would provide a safety valve by allowing the poor to resettle elsewhere during bad economic times, provide them with work on the railroad, and educate them with practical vocations.⁵

The depression brought about a religious revival in the fall of 1857 as worried residents began flocking to churches to pray. This revival had two reactions rooted in evangelical Protestantism: a reaction against slavery as an evil that might have attracted God's retribution in the form of the panic and a reaction to all forms of entertainment that were considered to be unpius. The following year saw the biggest revival in religion since the height of the Second Awakening of Charles G. Finney in the 1820s.⁶

THE LAST AMERICANS—THE COLLAPSE OF THE AMERICAN PARTY

Millard Fillmore's poor performance in the 1856 presidential election not only finished off his rather lackluster political career, but it doomed the American Party as a national party. The party continued to remain strong in a handful of states in the Northeast and Upper South, but these were too few to allow it to ever

hope to win the presidency. This meant that it could not attract the most ambitious young politicians who dreamed of becoming president one day. The party was left with old has-beens from the Whigs and middle-aged politicians who joined the party in 1855 and preferred to stay rather than leave and start over with the Republicans or Democrats.

It was most powerful in four states: Massachusetts, New York, Maryland, and Kentucky. Only in Maryland did it control the state government after the 1856 election. In Kentucky the Americans continued to hold the governor's office and the state senate until 1859. Violence and intimidation characterized American Party election tactics in Louisville. Louisville was the site of the last National Council meeting of the American Party in June 1857 with responsibility devolved to the State Councils. Elsewhere in the South, the Americans were influential only in isolated pockets such as New Orleans, a city with a very cosmopolitan composition.⁷

In November 1857, Banks won the governor's race with 60,000 votes to 37,500 for Henry Gardner and 31,000 for Democrat Erasmus Beach. In just three years Gardner had lost the support of two-thirds of Know Nothings. Gardner later became a Democrat and most of his American cronies from his faction followed him into the Democratic Party. The American Party passed away in Massachusetts as first Amos Lawrence, the former Cotton Whig leader, and then former Whig governor George Briggs were defeated in turn as American gubernatorial nominees. The Republicans had beat out the Americans to become the successor to the Whigs as the anti-Democrat party by both playing up Kansas and Sumner and by currying favor with nativists and temperance voters.⁸

In 1858, the Massachusetts legislature enacted a 2-year waiting period for immigrants before they could vote. This paled by comparison with the 21-year period originally demanded by Know Nothings in 1854 or the 14-year period considered by the legislature only the year before. As historian Eric Foner noted, "Far from demonstrating the connection between Republicanism and nativism, the two-year amendment indicated that even in Massachusetts nativism was dying out as a political force." Those who remained in the American Party in Massachusetts into 1859 stressed Unionism over nativism.⁹

Once the professional politicians like Gardner, Banks, Wilson, and Fillmore took over the Know Nothing movement, the rank-and-file members became alienated and began to leave the movement. At this point many activists switched to the Republican Party, which had already replaced the Know Nothings as the main opposition to the Democrats nationally. Gardner attempted to reduce Know Nothingism to nativism, Unionism, and fiscal conservatism. This failed, not just because it omitted antislavery politics, but because Gardner had converted a populist movement into a political machine. Senator Charles Sumner had scoffed in 1857: "You have no real principles on which you stand. You are nothing but a party of Gardnerites."¹⁰

After 1856, the American Party was dead in Connecticut. *New York Tribune* editor Horace Greeley made it his personal project to attract American Party loyalists into the Republican Party. In New York, after the Democrats defeated the Republicans in the 1857 state election, Horace Greeley called for a merger between the Republicans and the Americans. Greeley began appearing as a speaker on their platforms in the late spring of 1858. He also insisted on fair treatment for them at the Republican state conclave in New York in a number of editorials that he wrote. The Republicans and the Americans agreed to fusion in the state. The American and Republican parties attempted fusion in 1858 by meeting separately in two nearby halls. Each appointed a conference committee to agree on a common ticket with the other party. But the fusion failed because the Republicans ended up approving a platform without consulting the Americans and refused to rescind a plank condemning the Dred Scott decision. This was on the advice of Seward and Weed. The full Republican convention rejected the fusion proposal over the platform controversy. In an editorial, Greeley ended up blaming the failure on personal political ambitions including that of Thurlow Weed. But this proved to be academic as in 1858 most nativists voted Republican in New York. The American Party held the balance of power in both New York and Ohio after the 1856 election. In Ohio, Governor Chase refused to support a voter registration law out of fear that it would hurt him with Ohio's German voters.¹¹

By 1860 the Republicans had won the support of most Northern Fillmore voters without making major nativist concessions. The Lecompton controversy provided a bridge over which many Americans could cross. The biggest concession made to the nativists was that many delegates at the 1860 Republican convention in Chicago refused to support Seward for the nomination out of fear that it would hurt them with nativists. But the delegates also refused to support former Know Nothings Simon Cameron of Pennsylvania and Edward Bates of Missouri for the nomination. The biggest concession in the Republican Party was the formation of the Wide-Awake political clubs as they were an imitation of Know Nothing lodges. They were aimed at winning support for nativists intrigued by ceremonies and as a means of providing campaign support for the party.¹²

During the late 1850s there was a sizeable contingent of third party representatives in Congress numbering between twenty and thirty, mostly from the South. Historians refer to these variously as Whig-Americans or American-Whigs because many of them went directly from the Whig Party to the Know Nothings and the remaining few Whigs tended to vote with the Americans. During the Lecompton debate in 1857–58 they often attempted to attack the Democrats for being insufficiently vigorous in protecting Southern interests in Kansas. This is comparable to occasional Democratic attacks on Republican presidents from the right on national security issues during the Cold War and War on Terror. In 1859, these Whig-Americans numbered 27; 23 Southerners and 4 from New York and New Jersey.¹³

THE EMERGENCE OF LINCOLN

Abraham Lincoln first emerged in the national consciousness as a result of both the Dred Scott decision and the Lecompton controversy. Lincoln was a self-educated unschooled lawyer from Kentucky and Indiana who had moved to New Salem as a young adult. Not enjoying the hard work of farming and having failed as a shopkeeper in New Salem, Lincoln moved to Springfield and teamed up with Stephen Logan to become a lawyer. While still in New Salem, Lincoln volunteered for service in the Black Hawk War of 1832 and was elected captain of his militia unit. He never saw action, but he did use it to jumpstart his political career by running for the state legislature in 1832. He lost in his first attempt but won on his second try in 1834 and went on to serve for a decade combining his service in the legislature with a legal practice. Lincoln was one of the few Whig politicians in central Illinois at the time and a disciple of Henry Clay. Like Clay, Lincoln was opposed to slavery in theory but gave little evidence of being opposed to it in practice during his early years. Like Clay, he saw colonization as the solution to America's racial problems. But although he admired Clay, he was pragmatic enough to support both William Harrison and Zachary Taylor for the nomination as he realized that the two former generals had a better chance of being elected than Clay did. As a Whig legislator, Lincoln was concerned with widening economic opportunities for ordinary people and defending Clay's "American System" of a national bank, protectionism, and internal improvements. Slavery was a peripheral issue.¹⁴

Lincoln served in the legislature with Douglas and while Douglas's political career blossomed with his election first to Congress and then to the Senate, Lincoln's career stagnated. Lincoln was a good stump speaker and a "political hack." He was also a Whig in a Democratic state. Lincoln was elected to Congress in 1846, but did not take his seat until December 1847. For some reason he turned down the chance to finish out the term of his friend Edward Baker who had resigned in June 1846 to fight in the Mexican War. Lincoln, a free soil Whig in the late 1840s, made the political mistake of opposing the Mexican War and voting against it. The war was popular in his district so he decided not to even run for reelection, plus it was Whig policy to rotate nominations for the safe congressional seats.

Lincoln returned from Congress feeling like a miserable failure. He felt that he was a failure as a politician and only mediocre as a lawyer. He went through a severe depression upon his return to Springfield from Washington. Lincoln then applied himself to his law practice and emerged as a major lawyer working for both the railroads and riding the circuit with the district judge. He turned down a chance to run for Congress in 1850. With the death of his son Eddie in 1850 and his own father the following year, Lincoln became aware of his own mortality and developed a morbid taste in poetry. Lincoln kept his hand in politics by campaigning for Scott in 1852.

Normally Lincoln did not engage in politics during odd-years, and so this five-year gap is less substantial than it seems. But it serves to neatly separate his national career as a Republican politician involved in antislavery politics from his career as a local Whig politician. Lincoln used his time off from politics to hone his analytical skills by studying Euclidean geometry and developed his feeling against slavery. He also mentored several young men in both the law and politics. He reevaluated his life and wanted it to count for something and decided to concentrate on antislavery politics.¹⁵

Most of Lincoln's background argued against him becoming antislavery. First, he was born in a slave state within a hundred miles of Jefferson Davis's birthplace. Second, he married into a prominent proslavery Kentucky family. Third, Illinois was the most racist state in the North and there was no political percentage in being against slavery there. So where did Lincoln's antislavery impulse originate? What is known is that in 1837, the same year Elijah Lovejoy was murdered in Alton, Lincoln voted against an antiabolitionist resolution in the legislature that passed 77-6. And in 1849, Lincoln's bill for compensated abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia had the support of Joshua Giddings. But in 1847 Lincoln had served as cocounsel to a slaveholder seeking to recover his escaped slaves. In 1850, he described the new Fugitive Slave Law as "very obnoxious." He also repeatedly voted for the Wilmot Proviso but kept a low profile during the debates on it.¹⁶

Lincoln did not return to politics as a profession until 1854 as a result of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. He initially resisted the efforts of Owen Lovejoy to recruit him for the new Republican Party in 1854 as—like Seward—he thought that the Whig Party was still viable. Only in early 1856 did he give up on the Whigs and join the Republicans emerging as one of its leaders in the state. Starting in August 1854, he was a one-issue politician with a monomaniac interest in slavery. He gave an anti-Nebraska speech around the state at several venues starting in August before it was finally recorded by the press at Peoria in October (and thereafter was known as the "Peoria speech"). In 1854, he was elected once more to the legislature but gave up his seat, as was required by law, to run for the Senate as the Whig candidate. Free soilers endorsed him in 1855 and also endorsed him in 1846 when he ran for Congress. The new senator, Lyman Trumbull, soon joined the Republicans and was grateful to Lincoln. In 1858 the Republicans decided to announce their candidate for the U.S. Senate ahead of time so as to use it as a means of focusing support for their candidates for the legislature. Stephen Douglas was up for reelection and the party leadership decided that Lincoln was the best candidate to go up against Douglas because he had repeatedly debated Douglas in the legislature and in 1854.¹⁷

Lincoln's final law partner, William "Billy" Herndon, described Lincoln at various times as: "inordinately ambitious," "a man totally swallowed up in his ambitions," and "the most ambitious man in the world." Senator Lyman Trumbull said of Lincoln, "A more ardent seeker after office never existed." Orville Browning, Lincoln's lifelong adult friend agreed: "He was always a most

ambitious man.” His ambition in 1854–55 was to return to Washington as a Whig senator. Lincoln felt very dejected about having to give up the Senate seat to Trumbull in 1855. He also felt that the Whig Party was using him as its sacrificial lamb during the 1840s. Many of Lincoln’s political friends had joined the Know Nothings in 1854–55 and Lincoln could easily have joined them except for his scruples. He greatly resented Douglas’s airs of superiority because of his greater fame and reputation.¹⁸

Psycho-historians, however, have speculated that Lincoln, consumed by feelings of inadequacy and mortality sought both self-worth and immortality through political accomplishment. His ambitious wife, Mary Todd Lincoln, may have contributed to his ambition both by goading him in order to satisfy her own desire to feel important, and by leaving him with such an unhappy marriage, having him look for fulfillment in politics. Otherwise, he might have felt contented to be elected to the Senate like Ben Wade or Zachariah Chandler and other Radical Republicans.¹⁹

In 1856, Lincoln supported Justice John McLean of Ohio for the presidency. At the first Republican nominating convention in Philadelphia in 1856, Lincoln was the runner-up to William Dayton for the vice-presidential nomination. This was his first bit of national fame.²⁰

In April 1858 the Democrats had a state party convention in Springfield, where they endorsed the Cincinnati platform of 1856. This had the effect of cutting every tie “that drew our people Douglaswards,” according to Billy Herndon, Lincoln’s law partner. The Republicans met in Springfield on June 16, 1858. The delegates unanimously adopted a resolution that “Abraham Lincoln is the first and only choice of the Republicans of Illinois for the U.S. Senate, as the successor of Stephen A. Douglas.” This nomination before the election was unprecedented in American political history and foreshadowed the direct election of U.S. senators that came about only in the 1920s. That evening Lincoln made his famous House Divided speech to kickoff the campaign. In the speech, Lincoln warned Republicans—especially in the East—that “[Douglas] is not now with us—he does not pretend to be—he does not promise to ever be.” Lincoln knew that Douglas was not an antislavery politician nor could he ever be one as he was morally indifferent to slavery.²¹

Both the nomination and Lincoln’s House Divided speech were a major point in Lincoln’s political career. Only the nomination induced Douglas to debate Lincoln and Douglas rejected Lincoln’s proposal that they canvass the state together so that as many voters as possible could hear the arguments of both the candidates. Douglas told Philadelphia editor John Forney that “I shall have my hands full. He is the strong man of his party—full of wit, facts, dates—and the best stump speaker, with his droll ways and dry jokes, in the West. He is as honest as he is shrewd, and if I beat him my victory will be hardly won.” Notice that Douglas did not say *when I beat him*. His prediction turned out to be pretty accurate.²²

Lincoln carefully crafted his House Divided speech to build a case for a conspiracy—without having any real evidence that such a conspiracy

existed—within the Democratic Party to serve the interest of the Slave Power. Lincoln makes the argument that he first made at the time of the Dred Scott decision: the South will push to allow slaveholders to bring their slaves with them into the North. He went on in the speech to attack Douglas's doctrine of popular sovereignty. Later in the speech he made his conspiracy charge. Then he makes the case that Douglas is unsuitable for antislavery politics by arguing that a "living dog is better than a dead lion." The entire "House Divided" speech took between 30 and 35 minutes for Lincoln to deliver. The speech consisted of three parts: the House Divided preamble (7 percent), the conspiracy charge body (72 percent), and the "living dog" conclusion (21 percent). The speech was an attempt to justify the nomination of a Republican candidate to run against Douglas. Lincoln had to conveniently leave the whole Lecompton dispute between Douglas and the Buchanan administration out of his speech as it would have detracted from the credibility of his charge of a conspiracy. So he simply ignored it. A draft of the House Divided speech, about three-quarters the length of the final speech, was later found and was probably originally written by Lincoln in December 1857 as a reaction to Buchanan's first state of the Union message to Congress.²³

But had it not been for the Lecompton controversy and Eastern Republican support for Douglas, there may have been no Lincoln-Douglas debates, Lincoln would not have emerged as a national candidate and Seward probably would have been nominated as the Republican candidate. Douglas might well have beat Seward, and there might not have been a Civil War. Or so goes the claim of the late historian Don Fehrenbacher.²⁴

Lincoln's claim to the Senate nomination had been tacitly recognized for years before it became actual, based upon his prestige, his influence within the state, his hard work on behalf of the party without reward, and his reputation as a worthy opponent of Douglas on the stump. There was also his sacrifice on behalf of Trumbull in 1855. This was frequently mentioned in party press papers and correspondence. He was also the nominee because he was an Old Whig. The only person mentioned by some historians as a rival for the nomination, John Wentworth, the mayor of Chicago and editor of the *Chicago Democrat*, had no real interest in being senator and no support within the party for his nomination. Local county conventions throughout the state seconded and ratified the decision of the Springfield convention.²⁵

Serving as Lincoln's de facto campaign manager was his law partner William "Billy" Herndon. Both had been committed Whigs until the demise of that party and then Republicans. But Herndon was more radical than Lincoln and regularly corresponded with such prominent abolitionists as Garrison, Sumner, and Theodore Parker. Parker, in a letter, once defined democracy as "Direct Self-government over all the people, for all the people, by all the people." Herndon showed the letter to Lincoln and Lincoln filed the definition away mentally to pull out years later when he was writing the Gettysburg Address. Herndon served as mayor of Springfield in 1855 but otherwise was not a politician himself.

Herndon and Lincoln joined the Republican Party at the same time. Herndon went east to visit with the Republican leadership in early 1858 on Lincoln's behalf. And Herndon encouraged Lincoln to give his House Divided speech in July. "By—God, deliver it just as it reads . . . The speech is true—wise and politic; and will succeed—now as in the future." Because Herndon's brother and father were both Buchanan Democrats, he encouraged them to attack Douglas and he served as a liaison between Lincoln and the Illinois "national Democrats."²⁶

Lincoln initially proposed to Douglas, by letter on July 24, 1858, that the two engage in joint appearances all over the state together so that voters could hear the arguments of both the candidates. Douglas refused this—it would have been extraordinary as the incumbent to accept it. Lincoln then proposed a series of nine debates—one in each congressional district in the state. Douglas agreed to this, answering by letter the same day, except for in the Chicago and Springfield districts where both men had already spoken. Dates were worked out between the two candidates such that the whole series took place between August 21 and October 15. The Republican press, having been tipped off on Lincoln's challenge, goaded him into responding with charges of cowardice if he refused. "The idea that a man who has crossed blades in the Senate with the strongest intellects of the country . . . dreads encounter with Mr. Abraham Lincoln," stated the *State Register*, "is an absurdity that can be uttered by his organs only with a ghastly phiz."²⁷

The debates were only a small part of the campaigns of the two candidates: Lincoln gave 63 speeches and Douglas claimed to have given 130 speeches, although many of these were merely short impromptu remarks before small audiences of supporters. Lincoln tended to follow Douglas around the state and answered all of his charges in a rebuttal speech either the same day or the next day. Both candidates tended to concentrate on the center of the state as northern Illinois was solidly Republican and southern Illinois solidly Democrat, so the real contest was in central Illinois. Together they covered about 10,000 miles in a hundred days traveling by train, riverboat, and carriage. The debates, however, with their in-depth discussion of slavery turned the Senate contest into the most famous local race in American political history.²⁸

There was an agreed format to the debates. One candidate would speak for an hour, followed by the second candidate for ninety minutes and then the first candidate had a chance to rebut for thirty minutes. The candidates rotated speaking positions from debate to debate. Douglas had the skeleton of a set speech that he used in every debate. Lincoln also had the fragment of a speech but was more flexible so that he could pose questions to Douglas. Lincoln, despite his high-pitched voice, was a better orator than Douglas, mainly because he was such a good writer. Douglas "is among the least quoted of major American statesmen" according to historian Don Farenbacher. But despite this, both men were "exceedingly well matched."²⁹

Douglas's strategy was to expose Lincoln as a dangerous radical—a quasi-abolitionist, while Lincoln planned to expose Douglas's popular sovereignty

doctrine as a fraud that left the North exposed to the continued encroachment of the Slave Power. The debates did not reflect the quarrel between abolitionists and slaveholders, but rather the principle cleavage in Northern thought: congressional supremacy versus local supremacy in dealing with the issue of slavery expansion. Although Republicans saw the issue at stake in the campaign as the extension or containment of slavery, Lincoln at least once stated that “the real issue in this controversy” is “the sentiment on the part of one class that looks upon the institution of slavery as a wrong, and of another class that does not look upon it as a wrong,” as reported in the *Chicago Press and Tribune*. For the Democrats the contest was between popular sovereignty and congressional sovereignty or democracy and federalism.³⁰

Lincoln explicitly approved of all of the racial arrangements of his day, except for slavery, which were based upon white supremacy. But Lincoln also affirmed that the language of the Declaration of Independence applied to all Americans, black as well as white, whereas Douglas denied that it applied to blacks. There are two basic reasons for Lincoln’s views. First, he was a product of his time and his upbringing. He was born within a hundred miles of Jefferson Davis in Kentucky and grew up among Southerners in southern Indiana and Illinois. Second, as a politician campaigning in Illinois and not New England or the Western Reserve, he could not afford to get too far in front of his potential constituents if he hoped to get elected and serve in the Senate. His replies to Douglas were all carefully crafted so that they would be acceptable to the racial prejudices of his audience while not agreeing with Douglas. If read carefully, they meant something quite different than what they looked like at a glance or a superficial hearing.³¹

It should also be remembered that Lincoln was selected as Republican nominee in 1860 precisely because he did reflect the views of the Lower North and could hope to carry it, as opposed to Chase—who could not even carry his own state delegation—and Seward. Neither candidate had the support of his national party in 1858—Lincoln was abandoned by Eastern Republicans and Douglas by the administration.³²

The Lincoln-Douglas debates had two important results. First, they began the process of turning Lincoln into a national figure known across the North. Coverage of the debates and campaign was spotty in the national press, but the race received more coverage than any other Senate or House race that year. Later in 1860, the debate transcripts served as a major item of campaign literature for the Lincoln campaign—and for Douglas as well. Second, they tended to publicize Douglas’s so-called Freeport Doctrine—that despite the Dred Scott decision, popular sovereignty was still viable because of the local policing regulations that would be necessary to protect slavery.³³

In the first debate, in Ottawa on August 21, 1858, Lincoln laid out his position on slavery that he had held since 1854 and would hold until 1862. “I will say here . . . that I have no purpose directly or indirectly to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists,” exclaimed Lincoln.³⁴

In the sixth debate, in Quincy on October 13, Lincoln differentiated himself from Chase and Giddings and the other radicals in the party. "We think the Constitution would permit us to disturb it in the District of Columbia. Still we do not propose to do that . . ." ³⁵ But in the final two debates he declared that it was Republican policy that slavery was wrong and this is what distinguished his party from the Democrats. ³⁶

In the fall elections on November 2, 1858, the voters of Illinois cast about 125,000 votes for Republican candidates to the state legislature, about 121,000 for Douglas Democrats and about 5,000 for the Buchanan Democrats (National Democrats). But because of the apportionment of legislative districts, the Democrats elected 46 Democrats to only 41 Republicans. There were also thirteen state senators held over from the previous election, of whom eight were Democrats, so that when the legislature met in early 1859, Douglas was easily reelected to the Senate by a vote of 54 to 46. Even if the legislative seats had been apportioned exactly proportionately there would have been 44 Republicans to 43 Democrats elected to the Illinois assembly or a total of 51 Democratic votes to 49 Republican votes. Lincoln blamed his defeat on Whig Senator John J. Crittenden's endorsement of Douglas. Crittenden was considered by many to be the successor to Henry Clay and his endorsement would have been influential with many former Whigs in southern and central Illinois. Many of Lincoln's supporters blamed Greeley with his repeated praise of and support for Douglas for Lincoln's loss. The *Illinois State Journal*, a Republican paper, blamed the Republican loss on three factors: First, Douglas had won more of the Fillmore vote than Lincoln. Second, the apportionment of the state legislature gave Douglas a natural advantage. Third, many Republican voters defected to Douglas because of his defiance of Buchanan. But in the long run there was no real loser. Douglas retained his Senate seat and the chance to run for president in 1860 and Lincoln emerged as a national figure—both men were winners. ³⁷

The congressional elections went well for the Republicans nationally in 1858. The Republicans picked up eighteen seats in the House and regained control of the House when Congress met in February 1860 after a two-month battle for the speaker's office. The winner was Rep. William Pennington, a conservative Republican from New Jersey. The Republicans carried every free state except California. Among those Republicans elected for the first time was Charles Francis Adams, the former leader of the Conscience Whigs and Free Soil vice-presidential nominee in 1848. Like Lincoln, Adams had taken a break from politics to work on literary projects concerning his grandfather's papers. Now he returned to the fight as a supporter of William H. Seward. He had broken with those who favored a coalition with the Democrats and were now backing Chase. ³⁸

Seward had enhanced his own reputation as a radical by making a speech in late October 1858 in Rochester, New York in which he spoke of an "irrepressible conflict" between North and South. "It is an irrepressible conflict between opposing and enduring forces and it means that the United States must and will, sooner or later, become either entirely a slave-holding nation or entirely a

free-labor nation.” Seward spoke out against the expansion of slavery. Seward was campaigning on behalf of the Republican ticket in the New York state election. There was a four-way race for governor: Republicans, Democrats, Americans, and Gerrit Smith running on a People’s State ticket with a platform combining antislavery, temperance, and land reform. Seward’s Irrepressible Conflict speech provoked much more comment in the present than had Lincoln’s similar House Divided four months earlier because of Seward’s status as party leader. Seward had been “neutral” during Lincoln’s race against Douglas: he wanted Lincoln to be elected, but did not campaign for him or endorse him.³⁹

Seward was in reality a moderate—or even a conservative—not very different from Lincoln in his views toward slavery. His political beliefs were the basic conventional Republican beliefs of his day: free labor, Unionism, free enterprise, equality for all citizens. As a Whig, he had been quite a reformer and gained a reputation as a champion of both the Irish and Catholics. He had begun his political career as an Anti-Mason and one of the state leaders of the party. He then became a disciple of John Q. Adams and saw himself as Adams’s natural successor within the party. Unlike John Q. Adams, Seward was a party man. Unlike Charles F. Adams and Chase, he did not believe in third parties but was a staunch believer in the two-party system. He gained office and maintained his position through political and organizational skill rather than through charisma, and in this, was typical of the Whigs of his generation. Like Lincoln and Chase, Seward was an antiextensionist who did not want to interfere with slavery in the South where it was already established. Seward entered the antislavery struggle in the late 1840s about five or six years before Lincoln did. He had decided that slavery was the great question of the day during the Texas annexation debate in 1844. By the mid-1850s, Seward looked forward to forming an exclusively Northern party based upon antislavery and immigrants.⁴⁰

Lincoln feared that with the Democratic Party split, Douglas would try to take over the Republican Party or make it subservient to the Northern Democrats. On March 1, 1859 he told a Chicago rally that “[I]f we, the Republicans of this State, had made Judge Douglas our candidate for the Senate of the United States last year and had elected him, there would be to-day no Republican Party in this Union.”⁴¹

Lincoln’s “restless little engine that never stopped”—his political ambition—began acting up again during the fall of 1859. Seward had been absent in Europe and the Holy Land from May to October 1859. There he toured the battlefields of Waterloo and Solferino, which probably helped him to visualize the scale of suffering during the Civil War. Lincoln decided that he needed more national exposure if he were to become a presidential candidate so he began seeking out speaking engagements outside of Illinois. Lincoln went on a speaking tour to Ohio in late September 1859 and attacked Douglas’s *Harper’s Magazine* article that had just appeared arguing in favor of popular sovereignty. The Douglas article also provoked rejoinders from two of Dred Scott’s attorneys, from the Buchanan administration, and from Horace Greeley. The following

month he gave four speeches in southern Wisconsin, and in December he spoke in Kansas and became a serious political contender.⁴²

As political observers surveyed the political scene in early 1860, there were three primary candidates for the Republican nomination. Seward was the leading candidate. He was widely considered to be the party leader and the leader of the moderate antislavery movement. He had the solid support of the party in New York and its Republican press, with the notable exception of the *Tribune*. He also had the support of Thurlow Weed, the leader of the biggest machine in the party and the most astute political manager in the party. He had solid support in New England and the Upper North. Seward had two main weaknesses. First, he was considered too radical for the conservatives in the party, especially those in the border states. Second, his support for the Irish and immigrants while governor of New York in the 1840s made him unpopular with nativists.

The next leading candidate was Salmon Chase of Ohio. Chase had the support of the Free Soilers in the party—but this was the least important of the political factions in the party. Chase was considered to be even more radical than Seward and less adroit politically. His obvious personal political ambition went poorly with his claims that he was doing everything for the cause. Chase had pockets of political support within Ohio and New England—especially Massachusetts.

The third candidate was Edward Bates of Missouri. Bates had been a one-term Whig congressman in the 1840s and was prominent mainly in St. Louis. He had become a Fillmore supporter and presided over the final Whig nominating convention that nominated Fillmore in September 1856. He had never even bothered to become a member of the Republican Party. He had the support of the Blair family, which had won the nomination for Fremont in 1856, and of Horace Greeley. During 1859, a Bates-for-president movement was starting to build among conservative Republicans. Orville Browning, an attorney from Quincy, Illinois, and a personal friend of Lincoln, visited Bates at his St. Louis home on September 28, 1859. The two spent six hours discussing politics. Browning concluded that he was in general agreement with Bates on most issues and that Bates was “the best man that the Republicans can support.” Browning began organizing support among senior Republicans in Illinois for a Bates nomination.⁴³

Bates was endorsed editorially by a number of prominent papers in the North: the Springfield, Massachusetts *Republican*, the *Indianapolis State Journal*, and the *New York Tribune*. He was also backed by a number of influential men in Connecticut, New Jersey, Rhode Island, and Maryland. Bates and Charles Gibson, a close friend and political advisor, began actively planning strategy in December 1859. Bates realized that he could not carry Missouri as an antislavery candidate. Bates wished to avoid taking a position on slavery. His position amounted to popular sovereignty, but unlike Douglas he was critical of the Slave Power. Bates, like Clay before him, believed in forcible colonization as a solution to slavery. Bates decided to run on the issues of a protective tariff

and a central railroad to the Pacific. Bates wanted to run as a national candidate with a neo-Whig economic platform.⁴⁴

There were various other candidates such as: Fremont, the 1856 nominee; William Dayton, Fremont's New Jersey running mate; Simon Cameron, a former Democrat and American from Pennsylvania; and Lincoln. Lincoln's strategy was to run as a dark horse candidate who would "be available" once Seward had faltered. In the 1859 state elections, the Republicans had won control of five states, four of them in the Midwest: Iowa, Minnesota, New Jersey, Ohio, and Wisconsin. In the Far West and border states, there were six states in which the party was organized but had no prospect of victory.⁴⁵

The antislavery struggle lost a veteran warrior on June 5, 1859 with the death of Dr. Gamaliel Bailey, the editor of first the *Philanthropist* and then the *National Era* for a combined total of more than twenty years. Although he was a major figure in the Liberty Party and the Free Soil Party, he was less of a figure in the Republican Party after 1856 as his *National Era* lost circulation to the *Tribune*. Horace Greeley and Henry Raymond replaced him as influential opinion-makers within the party as the *Tribune's* combined circulation from its daily and weekly editions tripled from 1850 to the mid-1850s to reach a total of 129,000. Over the same period, the *Era's* circulation only increased by 3,000 to 18,000 total.⁴⁶

Bailey functioned as the antislavery conscience of the Republican Party. He publicly supported Seward for the nomination in 1859 as the stronger candidate and told Chase as much in person. The two remained friends and Chase helped raise money to pay for Bailey's medical bills. Bailey attempted to convince Chase to wait until 1864 or 1868 to run when Seward would be too old. He also believed that Seward was better placed to carry the Lower North.⁴⁷ Bailey attempted to unite the antislavery wing of the party behind a single candidate, but failed in this. He died while on his way to Europe and his widow took over the editing of the *National Era* before discontinuing publication in March 1860.⁴⁸

The year ended with the creation of a new party, the Constitutional Union Party, on December 29, 1859, through the merger of the national committees of the fossil Whig and American parties. By mid-January 1860, the organizational structure of the new party had been agreed upon and it was named the Constitutional Union Party at the suggestion of William Rives. The only prominent politician to support the new party was Senator John J. Crittenden of Kentucky, who had become the chief spokesman of compromise in the Senate following the deaths of Clay and Webster in 1852. The fusionists called for a national convention in May 1860 based largely on the strength of Crittenden's endorsement.⁴⁹

Victory at Last!

LINCOLN RUNS FOR PRESIDENT

In October 1859, Lincoln received an invitation from the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher to speak in front of a group of influential Republicans at the Cooper Union (also known as the Cooper Institute) in New York City. The sponsoring group consisted mainly of supporters of Chase, but it testified to Lincoln's rising status in the Republican Party that he was invited. Lincoln spent months carefully researching his speech in the state library in Springfield, Illinois. He also spent much time crafting it.¹ After the Gettysburg Address of November 1863 and his two inaugural addresses, it was probably the most important political speech that Lincoln made in his career—even more important than the House Divided speech or any of the debate speeches from 1858. Lincoln had already been handed the Senate nomination when he made his House Divided speech—it was an acceptance speech. The Cooper Union speech was Lincoln's announcement that he was a serious candidate for the presidential nomination of the Republican Party in 1860. And after all the critical and positive attention the speech received, Lincoln—who had always believed that Seward was much better qualified than he to be president—finally believed that he was really presidential material.²

The speech, given on February 27, 1860, laid out the views of the Founding Fathers on slavery in contrast to those of the Democratic Party in Lincoln's day. It was an argument against Douglas's popular sovereignty doctrine. In this opening, Lincoln laid out his method of argument—exegesis from the writings of the Founders. He then addressed the issue that arose from the Dred Scott decision and

the Southern interpretation of constitutional protection for their property rights. Here he was speaking directly to Southern slaveholders. Lincoln laid out what would be in today's parlance an "original intent" or "strict constructionist" view of the Constitution as it applied to slavery and property rights. Then he went on to lay out the Republican Party's task in regard to the South—convincing them that it had no intention of intervening where slavery already existed. Then near the conclusion of the speech, he obliquely mentioned the moral dimension: "Their thinking [slavery] right, and our thinking it wrong, is the precise fact upon which depends the whole controversy All they ask we could readily grant, if we thought slavery right; all we ask, they could as readily grant, if they thought it wrong."³

The first half of the speech was devoted to refuting Douglas's *Harper's Magazine* article of the previous September 1859. It was much better researched than Douglas's article had been—one of the advantages of being out of government. The second half was devoted to dealing with the South. In it he urged restraint in dealing with Southern provocations—in Kansas and elsewhere—and he repudiated the actions of John Brown. The speech ended with his exhortation to his party to believe that "LET US HAVE FAITH THAT RIGHT MAKES MIGHT." The audience was on its feet cheering. One of the event organizers, James Briggs, took the stage and predicted that "one of three gentlemen will be our standard bearer: William H. Seward, Salmon Chase, or the gallant son of Kentucky, who was reared in Illinois, and whom you have heard tonight." Lincoln was officially a serious candidate for the presidency. The speech was very well received in the press. For the first time in his career, Lincoln made the front page of the *New York Times*.⁴

Today, Lincoln is America's leading secular saint—no longer considered a man of flesh and blood but an icon of the democratic faith. As such both political parties claim him. But one of these parties embraces the doctrine of the "living Constitution" that can be expanded to fill the political need of the moment. This party, the linear descendant of the party Lincoln was referring to, should bear in mind what Lincoln said at the Cooper Union in February 1860 on such rights that "that instrument is literally silent about."

Two days later Seward made a major Senate speech on "capital states and labor states," that is, the North and the South. He called for the immediate admission of Kansas as a free state and he charged that it was the South that was responsible for the sectional conflict by aggressively trying to force slavery on the North. A half million copies of the speech were distributed in pamphlet form by the Republican Executive Congressional Committee and other groups during the 1860 campaign. Sumner said of the speech that "[I]t undertakes to plead the right cause without giving offense, & especially not to furnish expressions, phrases or sentences that might be used against him, & in this he seems to have succeeded." Sumner was neutral in the 1860 campaign as he was a friend of both Chase and Seward.⁵ When the convention convened in Chicago in May 1860, it was a case of the two candidates with the speeches.

Lincoln toured New England for two weeks following the Cooper Union speech, speaking to various Republican audiences. Ostensibly he was going to Philip Exeter Academy in New Hampshire where his son Robert had enrolled as a student on a visit. But he managed to campaign for Republican candidates in Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New Hampshire speaking at nine other engagements. He avoided Massachusetts, where he had stumped for Taylor a dozen years before, as it was Seward country. He mostly just repeated snatches of his Cooper Union speech.⁶

In Hartford, Connecticut, Lincoln tried out a new metaphor for slavery and containment. He compared slavery to a venomous snake in a newly made and empty bed, as compared with one in a bed in which children were sleeping. Lincoln spent several hours meeting with Gideon Welles, his future secretary of the Navy, after his speech. Welles thought that Seward was too radical and was looking for an alternative to him. After Lincoln left, Welles wrote an article on the conversation and Lincoln's speech for his paper, the *Hartford Evening Press*. Welles described him as "an effective speaker, because he is earnest, strong, honest, simple in style, and clear as crystal in his logic."⁷

CHICAGO, MAY 1860: THE REPUBLICAN CONVENTION

In March 1860, Bates was chosen as the nominee of an all-party opposition convention in Missouri and by the state Republican Party as well. At this point, Bates still wanted to run as a nonparty candidate like Tyler attempted to do in 1844 and Taylor did in 1848. Bates thought that a vigorous antislavery position was confined to the German-Americans and that those candidates willing to adopt such a stand, that is, Chase, Lincoln, and Seward, were pandering to the German vote.

Charles Gibson, his political advisor, Frank Blair, and Greeley agreed to act as his campaign managers in Chicago. Greeley was attending the convention as a delegate of Oregon as Weed had managed to keep him off the New York delegation. The three managers decided to concentrate on the uncommitted delegates as they figured that whoever came in second to Seward on the first ballot would eventually win. Bates had the support of the delegations from three of the four border states: Missouri, Maryland, and Delaware. But Bates had little support outside of the slave states.⁸

Chase had one major disadvantage compared to the other major candidates in 1860: he lacked a unified home-state delegation to back him. Justice John McLean was too old by 1860 to be a real threat to Chase, but Benjamin Wade was another matter. Many of the Ohio delegates disliked Chase both because of his Democratic background (he was a member of the state party in the early 1850s) and because he was pompous and arrogant. Wade became the alternative to Chase among these delegates. There were several Wade supporters in the Ohio delegation from both the Western Reserve and Cincinnati. Wade told Chase that he had

done nothing to encourage activity on his own behalf, but he also refused to formally withdraw from the race. Wade stayed in Washington during the convention to fight for passage of a homestead bill—he was not really interested in the presidency. Wade and Chase effectively cancelled each other out as candidates. Wade supporters wanted the delegation to adopt a unit voting rule—whichever candidate received a majority on an internal vote would receive the votes of the entire delegation. But Chase refused, presumably because he feared that he might lose the vote. On May 15 a *New York Tribune* reporter in Chicago wrote that Lincoln and Wade were the only realistic alternatives to Seward for the nomination.⁹

Chase lacked a political manager like Thurlow Weed or Judge Davis to make deals and trades for him in order to win the nomination. He just assumed that he would naturally be nominated as he was the best candidate. Chase always saw himself as pure, where others saw him as politically ambitious. Chase was oblivious during 1859 and early 1860 that Weed and Seward were moving to lock up the nomination.¹⁰

The Republican National Committee had called on December 29, 1859 for the nominating convention to be held in Chicago in May. Lincoln had his man, Norman Judd, on the selection committee for a site for the 1860 convention. Judd shrewdly waited until other sites had been debated and then suggested Chicago as a neutral location. This was probably also because both Illinois and Indiana were swing states and they hoped to influence the vote in the general election by holding their convention in the Midwest. Chicago was then a city of 100,000—very raw and busy, and the industrial capital of the Midwest. It was also Douglas's home city. The convention was to be held in a wooden log center built specifically for that occasion and known as the Wigwam. The Wigwam seated 10,000, and 8,000 were on hand for the opening day of the convention. The cost of its construction was met by public donations and by selling admission tickets to the opening ceremony at 25 cents apiece.

There were delegates representing the eighteen free states, the four border states, Virginia, Texas, and the District of Columbia, as well as the territories of Kansas and Nebraska. Presumably the Texas delegates were representing the large German-American community in the center of the state. The convention was the first in history to provide telegraph facilities for the use of the press.¹¹

Two days before the convention was to open, German-Americans from ten Northern states met at the *Deutsches Haus* (German House—a German cultural association) in Chicago. The Germans placed themselves on record as opposing any candidate with nativist leanings. This was aimed squarely at stopping the nomination of Edward Bates, as he was the only major candidate who had been a Know Nothing. This could also have affected Simon Cameron, who had also briefly been a Know Nothing in the mid-1850s while transitioning from the Democratic to Republican parties.¹²

Lincoln chose as his managers for the convention, friends that he had known for years from the legal profession: Judge David Davis, a huge man who was the

cousin of Lincoln's future foe, Radical Senator Wade Davis of Maryland; Norman Judd, a former anti-Nebraska Democrat and railroad lawyer; Gustave Koerner, a German-American lawyer from Belleville; and Orville Browning, a fellow lawyer and friend of Lincoln who had been supporting Bates. Davis functioned as the head of the group. Because of Lincoln's and his own work for the railroads, Judd was able to get free train tickets to Chicago and flood the city with Lincoln supporters from the outlying areas. He also managed to have counterfeit tickets printed up so that he could seat Lincoln supporters in half of the seats in the Wigwam. Charles Ray, editor of the *Chicago Press and Tribune*, also ran pro-Lincoln editorials during the campaign. The effect was to make Lincoln seem much more popular than he actually was.¹³

Lincoln adopted the same strategy that Bates did—except much more successfully. At the state Republican Party convention in Decatur in April the party had adopted the unit delegation rule and Lincoln easily won the nomination of the state party. Thomas Hanks—a relative of Lincoln's stepmother, Nancy Hanks—and Richard Oglesby, the convention chairman and a candidate for the Senate, jointly came up with the idea of bringing in a couple of split-rails from a fence that Lincoln had made decades earlier. Thus was born the campaign theme of "Honest Abe the Railsplitter" that was used so well in the general election campaign.¹⁴

Lincoln very cleverly played up his own advantages in answering a letter of inquiry from an Ohio delegate to him about the candidates' chances in Illinois. Lincoln implied that neither Seward, Chase, nor Bates could carry Illinois as all were only popular in half of the state. He refused to rate his own chances.¹⁵

Davis conducted a "stealth campaign" on behalf of Lincoln in Chicago. The managers went around to the various delegations and talked up their candidate without denigrating any of the other candidates. The strategy was to win enough delegates on the first ballot, both to prevent Seward from winning the nomination and to have Lincoln emerge as the principal alternative to Seward. Davis's goal was a hundred Lincoln delegates on the first ballot. The uncommitted delegates were assessing candidates in terms of their "availability" or what we would call today their electability. That is, they wanted someone who could carry all the states that Fremont carried in 1856 plus Illinois, Indiana, and Pennsylvania. Thus, any candidate from one of these three states had an automatic advantage. There were two such candidates: Lincoln and Senator Simon Cameron of Pennsylvania. But the other thing that delegates were looking at was image. Cameron, a former Democrat and Know Nothing, had a reputation as a dirty, corrupt machine politician. Bates, Chase, and Cameron were all weak in the North outside of their home states; Seward was weak in the three "swing" states. That left Lincoln as the ideal candidate. Lincoln's managers very effectively made this argument to the various delegations. Most delegations contained at least a couple of people who had seen Lincoln speak in public and were impressed. Browning was sent to the swing state delegations to head off a

move to nominate Bates. As a former Bates supporter, he was very effective in convincing the delegates of Lincoln's relative strengths vis-à-vis Bates.¹⁶

The first two days of the convention were devoted to party organizational business and the platform. Candidate managers used the time to lobby delegates and delegations that were uncommitted conferred amongst themselves. Governor John Andrew of Massachusetts went to doubtful delegations on the eve of the nomination vote and separately told delegations from Pennsylvania, Indiana, New Jersey, and Illinois that New England supported Seward as the nominee. But he added that New England wanted victory above all else and would switch to a compromise candidate if necessary. Weed's people at the convention hurt their candidate's chances by drinking too much and boasting of their large campaign fund. This played into the existing image of a corrupt Albany political machine. A supporter wrote to Lincoln from Chicago, "Things are working, keep a good nerve—be not surprised at any result."¹⁷

Neither Indiana nor Pennsylvania believed that the party could win with Seward as the nominee. A twelve-man committee of three delegates each from Illinois, Indiana, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, met for six hours—from six to midnight—in the suite of David Wilmot. New Jersey agreed to drop favorite son candidate William Dayton and back Lincoln if Pennsylvania would do the same. Gustave Koerner and Browning were very effective in convincing the Pennsylvania and Indiana delegates that Bates would never carry any state with a large German population, including his own. Judge David Davis met with the Pennsylvania delegation after midnight and promised a cabinet post for Cameron if Pennsylvania would back Lincoln on the second ballot. The state's caucus met the next morning at nine and voted by a six-vote majority to support Lincoln over Bates on the second ballot.¹⁸

Greeley went around to different groups of delegates and gave them a version of a set speech on Seward that stressed his rival's unelectability. Greeley did just that by introducing senior politicians from each state. Few knew of Greeley's split from Seward and Weed, and so his advice was taken as being for the good of the party rather than out of personal animus toward the candidate.¹⁹

There were 465 delegates at the convention, hence the winning total was 233. As the nomination opened, seven names were placed in contention at the Wigwam: Seward, Lincoln, Bates, Cameron, Chase, Dayton, and McLean. On the first ballot the totals were as follows: Seward 173½, Lincoln 102, Cameron 50½, Chase 49, Bates 48, and the remainder scattered with no other candidate having more than 14. A deal had been made with the Pennsylvania delegation that Cameron would get a cabinet seat if Lincoln won if his delegation switched to Lincoln after the first ballot. He had earlier made a similar promise of support to Seward but with no return commitment on Seward's part. Lincoln had only two states—Illinois and Indiana—solidly for him on the first ballot. On the second ballot, Seward gained only 11 votes while Lincoln gained 79—from Pennsylvania, Vermont, and Delaware. On the second ballot Lincoln also picked up the anti-Chase votes in the Ohio delegation. Thus, by the second day of the

convention it was a two-man contest between Lincoln and Seward. On the third ballot, Maryland shifted from Bates to Lincoln and Ohio was voting 2:1 for Lincoln over Chase, and he picked up Dayton's support in New Jersey. At this point Lincoln was only 1½ votes short of nomination and Seward had actually lost votes since the second ballot. Ohio quickly switched four votes to Lincoln and Lincoln was nominated. On the final ballot, Lincoln led Seward both in the Midwest and South and in New England (by nine votes). Seward led Lincoln only in the Middle Atlantic States—by only two votes, 77 to 75, representing the greater strength of his home state. The Seward people then moved to make the nomination unanimous. Senator Harry Hamlin of Maine was chosen vice-presidential nominee on the first ballot the following day, both for geographic balance and because he was a Seward man.²⁰

Some commentators, both at the time and later, contrasted the Republican platforms of 1856 and 1860 and commented unfavorably on the later. It was not so much that the Republicans watered down their antislavery planks as simply that they expanded the scope of their platform by adding economic planks—Whig in character. Joshua Giddings, an Ohio delegate supporting Chase, was one of these critics. He stormed out of the convention after his amendment supporting a mention of the Declaration of Independence was defeated for inclusion in the platform. "I see that I am out of place here," said Giddings to a delegate that tried to stop him. The amendment was voted on again and passed and Giddings returned.²¹

Historians Bruce Catton and William Catton argue that even on what was known about Lincoln in 1860, and not on the basis of what was known about his character and wisdom from his presidency, Lincoln was the best possible Republican candidate in 1860. Lincoln represented the core beliefs of his party and was in the center of the spectrum in his attitude toward slavery. He believed that it was morally wrong, should not be allowed to spread, but should not be disturbed where it already existed. Lincoln was also not a radical—or even a supposed radical like Seward. And he came from one of the states that were strategic for Republican victory in November. Lincoln was also the first Western candidate nominated by a major party since Harrison in 1840—and Harrison had only served a month in office. So his candidacy was very popular in the West. But this was partially cancelled out by Douglas, also being from Illinois. Lincoln was acceptable to all factions of Republicans: Henry Wilson, David Wilmot, Cassius M. Clay, and Schuyler Colfax all approved of the nomination.²²

We can compare this with the other possible candidates in 1860. Both Seward and Chase were considered too radical by much of the potential Republican electorate. Jacob Collamer of Vermont and William Dayton of New Jersey had few positive qualities to recommend them. Nathaniel Banks was a local politician and had been a Know Nothing, which would have lost him the German vote. Ben Wade had too many rough edges even for 1860. Bates was openly opposed by the Germans as a Know Nothing and was too conservative for New England. Cameron was an industrial magnate, who sought high office for

patronage purposes rather than to implement any particular policies. He did not like the slavery issue, was not an orator, and had a bland personality. Half of his supporters in the Pennsylvania delegation would vote for him only as long as they thought he had no real chance of being nominated. And technically he was not even a Republican—he belonged to the Middle Atlantic fusion party, the People's Party. He was also both a former Democrat and Know Nothing. And John McLean, at 75, was too old.²³

On Washington's Birthday, February 22, 1860, the organizers of the Constitutional Union Party issued a proclamation denouncing the two main parties, appealing for the cause of Union, which called upon citizens to organize state nominating conventions. It also called upon delegates selected at these conventions to meet in Baltimore on May 9 for a national nominating convention. This was over a year after a large opposition meeting made up of former Whigs at the Nashville courthouse had nominated retired Senator John Bell for president. In November 1859, the Philadelphia *North American* newspaper announced in favor of Bell for president. On January 6, 1860, the *Republican Banner and Nashville Whig* came out for Bell for president and was soon joined by a dozen other papers in the major cities in Tennessee. On January 11, the opposition members of the Tennessee legislature held a caucus and proposed Bell as a presidential candidate and called for a state convention on Washington's Birthday. Clearly, interests in Tennessee were organizing a nominating campaign on behalf of Bell, probably with his knowledge and approval.²⁴

The party had an encouraging initial reception in the following states: North Carolina, Kentucky, Virginia, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania. In Boston, there was a monster convention with over 800 delegates from over 200 Massachusetts towns that recommended a ticket of Crittenden and Edward Everett. In Philadelphia, there was a monster meeting in early February. From Mississippi came reports that "[t]he movement is running through the country like fire upon the prairie." But then came discouraging reports from New Jersey. From Pennsylvania came the word that outside Philadelphia there was no support.²⁵

Initially, both party members and the press assumed that the party's presidential nominee would be Crittenden himself. But he refused to seek the nomination, saying that "no ambition for the Presidency guides or troubles me." Crittenden told a group of old Whigs in New York that he would not run in December 1858.²⁶ The leading candidates for the nomination included Bell, Sam Houston of Texas, Edward Bates, and Winfield Scott. Bates apparently did not have a problem with being nominated—or at least competing for the nomination—by two separate parties. But in March he issued a statement recognizing Congress's competence to regulate slavery in the territories, demonstrating that he was more in contention for the Republican nomination. This was in response to a group of Missouri Republicans who demanded a clear-cut statement on the slavery issue. His statement finished him with Constitutional Unionists.²⁷ James Bennett, editor of the *New York Herald*, a Democratic paper, referred to the convention as a "great gathering of Fossil Know Nothings and Southern

Americans.” Bennet wrote, “The delegates may sleep with the nigger, eat with the nigger, but don’t allow his woolly head to come into the convention.” Bell was the youngest of all the likely candidates who ranged in age from 64 to 74.

When the convention opened on May 9, only two of the 21 members of the Whig national committee were in attendance along with half of the American national committee. Eight Northern states and two Southern states failed to send any delegates. Few delegates to the convention were under age 60. The “Old Gentlemen’s Party” was ridiculed by Republicans. Bell was nominated on the second ballot with 138 votes to 69 for Houston. Edward Everett, the former secretary of state under Fillmore after Webster’s death, was named Bell’s running mate by acclamation. Everett did not really want the nomination. Greeley labeled the candidates for the nomination as “unsuitable for the present geological age.” No platform was adopted other than “the Constitution and Union and Enforcement of the Laws.” This was based on the old Whig belief that “platforms are nothing” and that the candidate “must be the platform.”²⁸

Bell accepted the nomination on May 21 with few real hopes for success. Bell declined to answer any questions on the grounds that he had been nominated by a convention, “which deliberately resolved to adopt no platform, or declaration of principles, other than such as are implied in the pledge to maintain the Constitution, the Union, and the Laws.”²⁹

Bell was a controversial politician hated by many Southern Democrats and distrusted by the ultra wing of Southern Whigs. He had served as secretary of war under both Harrison and Tyler. In the North he was admired by some supporters of Douglas. Bell had never been a very popular politician and he was now 64 years old, a political has-been from the era of Clay and Webster. But his nomination was a possible threat to the Republican absorption of the Fillmore electorate in the North.³⁰

Shortly after his nomination, Lincoln sat down in his law office in Springfield to calculate his chances of winning the election. He figured that he would get all the states that Fremont won in 1856 for 114 electoral votes. He also calculated that he could win part of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Indiana, and Illinois for a total of 169 electoral votes or a healthy margin over the 152 needed to win.³¹ He turned out to be right about these and Iowa and Minnesota probably would have been safe bets as well for another eight electoral votes.

CHARLESTON AND BALTIMORE 1860: THE DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION

On February 10, 1860, a caucus of Senate Democrats met in order to “harmonize” their positions on the territorial question. Southern senators in the caucus demanded that the Democrats back the passage of a federal slave code—something that would change slavery from being a result of state law to federal law. Rep. John McClernand, a Douglas supporter, argued that Douglas was the real target of the caucus. The strategy of the Southern fire-eaters was to formulate

a platform so radical that either Douglas would be forced to reject it and be branded a traitor, or if he accepted, it would doom him as a candidate. His defeat would then cause the election of a “Black Republican,” which in turn would trigger secession.³²

Democrats had given little thought to the consequences when they scheduled their 1860 convention for Charleston—the capital of the most aristocratic non-democratic state in an aristocratic region, the home of the fire-eaters—the advocates of Southern secession and nationhood. The weather was already hot when the Democrats convened in the city in April 1860. Delegates began arriving on Wednesday, April 18, even though the convention was not scheduled to begin until the following Monday. The temperature was approaching 100 degrees during the heat of the day and most Northern delegates were overdressed, even by the formal standards of the day.

There were three separate regional groups of delegates each with its own interests. The Southerners, for the first time in decades, lacked a single candidate, either one of their own or a Northern doughface, around whom they could unite. The second group, from the Midwest or the states of the old Northwest Territory, saw Douglas as their only hope of survival in the face of growing Republican strength. Some of this group let it be known that they would rather vote for a Republican than for another Democrat and that they would only accept popular sovereignty as the solution to the territorial question. The last group was from the Northeast—from the “rotten boroughs” of the large cities teeming with immigrants and the urban poor. They were interested mainly in a candidate who could win and continue to dispense patronage to keep their political machines running. They were willing to go with whomever they thought could win. Initially their choice was Douglas.³³

Douglas remained in Washington throughout the convention, as Lincoln would remain in Springfield, as it was then the custom for candidates not to attend their own party’s conventions. Douglas’s supporters were looking for a confrontation with the South as they smarted under Republican charges that they were subservient to the Slave Power and wanted a chance to disprove the charge. Robert Rhett, Jr., editor of the *Charleston Mercury*, wrote the obituary of the Democracy. “The Democratic party, as a party, based on principles, is dead. It exists now only as a powerful faction. It has not one single principle common to its members North and South.”³⁴

The Democratic convention opened on Douglas’s 47th birthday—April 23. As usual for the Democrats, the two-thirds majority rule was in effect for nomination. The delegations of all of the Deep South states—those bordering the Gulf of Mexico, Georgia, and Arkansas—convened before the convention opened and agreed on a demand for a federal slave code for the territories. The Douglas supporters were unconcerned as they thought that a walkout would make it easier to reach the two-thirds majority. Eight Southern delegations withdrew from the convention after ten days when a deadlock was reached on the party platform and after a deadlock had been reached on the presidential nomination.

The delegates of the Deep South or “Gulf squadron,” as they are known to history, walked out. The New York delegation supported a formula that required two-thirds of the original delegates, not two-thirds of those remaining as Douglas had counted on, in order to nominate. On May 4, 1860, the convention adjourned with an agreement to reassemble in Baltimore in six weeks time to see if by then agreement could be reached.³⁵

Douglas began drinking heavily after the convention adjourned on May 4. After Lincoln was nominated, Douglas told his supporters that Lincoln was the best debater that he had ever faced and he anticipated “a devil of a fight.” Douglas was himself confined to his home with bronchitis. The combination of grief and illness probably had a negative effect on Douglas’s judgment, impairing it during a crucial time. Douglas supporters from the Midwest were threatening to walk out of Baltimore if he did not get the nomination and Douglas endorsed this.³⁶

Douglas’s strategy was to attempt to bribe the South to support his nomination with the vice presidency. Douglas leaned toward Alexander Stephens of Georgia, the former Whig, as his running mate. The convention reconvened on June 18, 1860 in Baltimore, the traditional site of conventions of both the Democrats and the Whigs. The convention met for six days and went through 59 ballots before Douglas was finally nominated. At one point, Douglas despaired of ever being nominated and wrote to Representative William Richardson with an offer to withdraw from the contest.³⁷

On June 22–23, the Southern delegates, who with the exception of the South Carolinian and Floridian delegations had all showed up in Baltimore, walked out of the Democratic convention. This removed more than a third of the total delegates. The walkout was over the territorial issue in the platform. The convention adopted the minority report leaving the issue up to the Supreme Court to determine the powers of the territorial legislatures in restricting slavery. With the composition of the Supreme Court—the Taney Court—being what it was, this was likely to result in a Southern victory. But the South wanted their “rights” guaranteed. The entire Deep South walked out. Chairman Caleb Cushing of Indiana ruled that two-thirds of the original delegate total was still needed to nominate.

Douglas had his Southern supporters, most of whom were not from the planter class, organize their own rival delegations. When the convention reconvened there was a case of rival delegations from several of the Southern states—Douglas supporters and the original bolter delegations who were not wanted back in. Douglas used his majority at the convention vote to admit his supporters from Alabama and Louisiana, as well as half of the votes from Georgia and two votes from Arkansas to go to his supporters. At this ruling the Upper South bolted as well, and the party was truly split on sectional lines.

Douglas won the nomination on the second ballot after the walkout. He still did not have the required two-thirds but he had a large enough majority that the convention voted to rule him nominated. A running mate from Alabama was chosen, who declined to run, and was subsequently replaced with Herschel

Johnson of Georgia, a former senator and governor. The day after this, a convention of rival delegates—81½ from the slave states and 23½ from the free states—convened in another hall in Baltimore and nominated Vice President John C. Breckinridge of Kentucky and Governor Joseph Lane of Oregon as their nominees for the election.³⁸

“Secession is disunion,” Douglas told a crowd of supporters. “Secession from the Democratic party means secession from the federal Union.” This was more in the nature of a prediction than a statement of fact. But Douglas probably equated the Democracy with the Union. If he could not win control of the Union, he at least wanted to win control of the Democratic Party.³⁹

THE GENRAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN: JUNE TO NOVEMBER 1860

Shortly after the convention, all of Lincoln’s rivals had pledged their support for his candidacy. Weed visited Springfield within a week of the convention and talked with Lincoln for five hours. He went away very impressed with the candidate’s knowledge of human nature.⁴⁰

Charles Sumner had finally returned to take up his Senate seat in Washington on a full-time basis in late 1859, at which time he was assigned to the Foreign Relations Committee.⁴¹

A House investigating committee on corruption in the Buchanan administration published its report in June 1860. Historian Michael Holt has dubbed the administration “undoubtedly the most corrupt before the Civil War and one of the most corrupt in American history.”⁴² The Republicans distributed an abridged version as a campaign document. It was full of stories of graft and bribery in government contracts.⁴³

By the end of June there were four sets of candidates—nominees—representing four different parties, or at least factions in the case of the Democrats. As in 1856, this broke down into two separate elections—one in the North and one in the South. The difference was that this time there was no candidate who was a serious contender in both races. The election amounted to a Lincoln versus Douglas race in the North and a Breckinridge versus Bell race in the South. Although there were several states in which the voters had the choice of all four tickets, in most states at most three of them were considered serious. Lincoln did not even run in the Deep South and beyond the border states and Virginia did not receive more than a relative handful of votes. Of these two separate elections, only the Northern election mattered. If the Republicans swept the North, Lincoln would be elected president. If they did not, the election would probably end up going to the House for a decision for the first time since 1824. For this reason, and because this book is the story of Northern antislavery politics, this account will focus on the Lincoln-Douglas race.

Lincoln, Breckinridge, and Bell played the traditional role of presidential candidates in the antebellum era in that, except for token appearances, they were

neither seen nor heard between the nomination and the election. Douglas broke with tradition and created the modern role of the candidate on the stump.

Just to illustrate what a small political world it was in 1860—three of the presidential candidates were known to each other fairly well. Breckinridge was a distant relative of the family of Lincoln's wife, Mary Todd, and she and he had been playmates when they were growing up. When the Lincolns visited Kentucky in 1849 to visit Mrs. Lincoln's family, Lincoln became acquainted with Breckinridge. Mary Todd had dated Douglas before marrying Lincoln, and Douglas and Lincoln had known each other for decades in Illinois state politics. Douglas and Breckinridge served in Congress together, first in the House and then the Senate and Breckinridge was an investor in some of Douglas's real estate deals in the mid-1850s. Breckinridge also backed Douglas against Lincoln in the 1858 Senate race. The fourth candidate, Bell would have known Breckinridge and Douglas from the Senate, but had only met Lincoln once, years before.⁴⁴

Horace Greeley played a major role in the 1860 Republican presidential campaign, as he had in 1856, not just through his column in and editorship of the *New York Tribune*, but mainly through the production of Republican campaign materials that were distributed at cost to the party. With the assistance of John Cleveland, Greeley compiled a manual for Republican campaign workers that consisted of the main letters and addresses of all the candidates, the party platforms, and a "history of the struggle respecting slavery in the territories, and of the action of congress as to the freedom of the public lands." It was entitled *A Political Textbook for 1860*. By late August 1860, 10,000 copies had been sold and the work was entering its seventh printing. Both Greeley and Charles Dana, Greeley's assistant editor, spoke to Wide-Awake clubs and urged them to study the manual and spend time convincing their friends to vote Republican. From July 1860 until the election in November, the semi-weekly edition of the *Tribune* ran a "campaign edition" that carried reprints of Lincoln's speeches, a biographical sketch by an Illinois Republican, and reprints from other papers and from Greeley's "political textbook." The *Tribune* also reprinted Lincoln's Cooper Union address and sold it as a campaign tract for a penny a copy.⁴⁵

The *Tribune* never took Lincoln seriously as a presidential candidate before the Republican convention. On the eve of the convention, Greeley sent a report back to New York that Seward had the nomination wrapped up, despite his own efforts on behalf of Bates. Greeley had first met Lincoln in Washington in 1848 when both were Whig congressmen and, apparently, he did not make much of an impression on Greeley. The *Tribune* ran an editorial on May 19, entitled "Honest Old Abe" endorsing Lincoln, while Greeley was still in Chicago. Three days later, after he was back, Greeley insisted on having the last word by running an editorial arguing that Bates would have been a better choice. The *Tribune* denounced both John Bell and Douglas as hypocrites while praising Lincoln as a statesman in the mold of Jackson and Taylor. Breckinridge was described in the paper as a good man in a bad cause. Throughout the campaign, the paper downplayed the danger of disunion.⁴⁶

A second influential New York paper backing Lincoln in 1860 was the *New York Times*, edited and published by Henry Raymond. Raymond was similar to Greeley in that, he mixed journalism with politics in his career. In 1855, he was the Whig lieutenant governor of New York when the Whigs merged with the Republicans. Always a partisan Seward supporter, Raymond never had a falling out with Seward as Greeley did. In 1860, he loyally supported Seward through the Chicago convention and even afterward, not immediately switching to support Lincoln. After Chicago, Raymond accused Greeley of “treachery and treason” for backing Bates and doing everything he could to defeat Seward. Greeley responded by publishing his 1854 “resignation letter” from the political firm of Seward, Weed, and Greeley in the *Tribune* in order to refute this charge. The *Times* and most of the New York press then reprinted the letter the next day.⁴⁷

Raymond stumped New York, speaking for Lincoln at New York City, Brooklyn, Rochester, and the northern counties of New York. The *Times* endorsed Lincoln and spoke of the Republican Party as a conservative party—as it had been since its formation. Raymond apparently wanted to see how many times he could use the words conservative and eminent in a single paragraph—or maybe he just lost his Thesaurus.⁴⁸

A Columbus, Ohio publisher published during the campaign a book entitled, *The Political Debates Between Honorable Abraham Lincoln and Honorable Stephen A. Douglas in the Celebrated Campaign of 1858 in Illinois*. It was reprinted from the Chicago press at the time. Voters used sources like these in lieu of listening to candidate stump speeches as Lincoln only made one short speech at an event in Springfield. Murat Halstead of the Cincinnati Commercial compiled a record of all the political conventions in 1860 in *The Caucuses of 1860*. Other campaign-related books issued included a compilation of the speeches of Lincoln and Hamlin, a book on the Dred Scott case, one on the Kansas controversy, one on slavery—*The Barbarities of Slavery*—another on the need for homesteads—*Land for the Landless*, and *The Democratic Leaders for Disunion*.⁴⁹

Lincoln refused to cooperate with most biographers because he did not want to provide easy ammunition for Democrats. Lincoln did give a biographical sketch to John Locke Scripps, an editor of the *Chicago Press and Tribune*. Scripps used this to write an extensive biography. Between 100,000 and 200,000 of these biographies were distributed during the election. The Republican “Helper’s Book” put out by the Republican Executive Committee and consisting of Lincoln’s speeches, excerpts from the Lincoln-Douglas debates, and other information had a circulation of hundreds of thousands. This was good, as the Democratic press commented that Lincoln was so unknown that several Republican papers had incorrectly referred to him as Abram Lincoln.⁵⁰ Many puns about Lincoln’s surname were made in the Democratic press. The Republican press retaliated with ditties about Douglas. The other parties also used to refer to the leaders of the Constitutional Union Party as “dumb-bells” and “Bell-zebubs” (a reference to Satan).⁵¹

Most political professionals, then as now, realized that for the mass of voters, political choice was much more a matter of emotion than of rational intellectual choice. The Republicans ran a “hurrah” campaign of parades, singing, and a spectacle reminiscent of the Harrison “log cabin and cider” campaign of 1840 or the Democratic “Old Hickory” campaigns of 1828 and 1832. For three dollars, a young male Republican supporter could purchase a Wide-Awake uniform and cape that would allow him to participate in the parades that were held in all the major cities in the North. “Wide-Awake” was a name used by the Know Nothings for their early lodges in the early 1850s. The name could be used to win nativist support without alienating immigrants whose votes the Republicans needed to win. The Douglas Democrats attempted to match the Wide-Awakes with their “Little Giants” and the Bell supporters even had their “Bell-ringers.” The Breckinridge Democrats had their “National Democratic Volunteers.” But the candidate spoke only once during the campaign at a giant barbecue in Ashland, Kentucky—the home of Henry Clay. The Constitutional Union Party also attempted to reproduce the vacuity of the 1840 Harrison campaign with lots of spectacle featuring big bells.⁵²

For the “hurrah” portion of the campaign, Northern publishers supplied the *Wide-Awake Vocalist* and the *Rail-Splitter’s Song Book*. The songwriters included some of the North’s leading poets: James Russell Lowell, the Boston abolitionist who had mocked Van Buren in verse in 1848 as not being antislavery enough; John Greenleaf Whittier, the Quaker poet and reporter for the *National Era* for a dozen years; William C. Bryant, the Ohio journalist; and even Greeley himself. The Republican theme song in 1860 was “Ain’t you glad you joined the Republicans,” which they sang incessantly at their rallies.⁵³

The Wide-Awakes specialized in marching at night in torchlight parades. A large torchlight parade occurred in New York City on October 3, 1860, in which the *New York Times* estimated there were 11,500 torches. The *New York Evening Post* claimed that the official report said that 19,334 Wide-Awakes took part. This is the equivalent of marching a modern infantry division through the city. An estimated 75,000 people attended the rally, which included a three-hour parade of floats. Many parades also featured 33 pretty young women, representing the states of the Union, with a thirty-fourth in rags representing Kansas.⁵⁴

The Democratic press, possibly out of a sense of jealousy, made fun of the Wide-Awakes.⁵⁵ Most of the press coverage of the campaign was partisan and, in covering the opposition activities, satirical. The *Easton (PA) Times* reported that “the Douglas wing of the split-tail democracy have organized a campaign club and call it the ‘Douglas Invincibles.’ After the election, its members will be ‘Douglas Invisibles.’” But as the campaign progressed the harassment grew stronger than ribbing in the press. Some groups broke up speeches of the rival parties. Sometimes this was just with noise and sometimes with missiles such as eggs and even bricks.⁵⁶

Douglas's campaign speeches were the objects of ridicule in both the Republican and the Southern press. After the October state elections were held in several states, the *Illinois State Journal* ran a table showing the dates and places where Douglas spoke and the number of votes that Republicans gained in each city. Douglas reported that he was going to visit his mother and then made a circuitous trip to her home speaking at numerous places along the way. Republican papers ridiculed this, in spite of it being exactly what Lincoln had done in February 1860 with his visit to his son Robert.⁵⁷

The Democrats, both North and South, tried to paint the Republicans as abolitionists and violent ones at that, rather than as merely antiextensionists. This was part of the aftermath of the failed Harper's Ferry raid, John Brown's legacy. Newspapermen were forever questioning the veracity and integrity of papers supporting rival candidates—whom they accused of “shoveling offal.” Lincoln's opponents dug through his voting record as a one-term congressman in an attempt to find ammunition against him.⁵⁸

Lincoln had a whole stable of proxy candidates campaigning on his behalf—first among them were his defeated rivals Seward and Chase. Seward toured New England in August on behalf of Lincoln. The following month he and Charles F. Adams toured the Midwest. They toured Michigan, then Wisconsin and Minnesota, then down into Iowa and Kansas, and finally back home through Illinois and Cleveland. The tour received favorable coverage in the press. Seward's train made a brief stopover in Springfield while touring Illinois, and Lincoln came aboard. It was the first time the two men had seen each other in twelve years. “Twelve years ago you told me that this cause would be successful,” Lincoln told Seward, “and ever since I have believed that it would be.” Seward spoke to a crowd at the Palace Garden in New York City on November 2, four days before the election. He urged peace and reconciliation.

Chase toured the Midwest with Seward and spoke in Ohio in numerous cities. In addition, Cassius Clay, the Kentucky abolitionist, Greeley, Charles Sumner, and Carl Schurz campaigned vigorously on Lincoln's behalf. These various stump speakers and others not only talked about the Slave Power and Kansas, but also about the rampant corruption in the Buchanan administration, the advantages of homesteads, economic tariffs (particularly in Pennsylvania), and a Pacific railroad, and condemned nativism. It was a carefully crafted formula.⁵⁹

During the 1860 campaign, many Republicans, including Seward, spoke of blacks as a weak, feeble race and compared them to Indians. Republicans also spoke of the dangers of racial amalgamation—miscegenation—being spread to the West if slavery were extended. Republican racial attitudes were essentially identical to those of the Barnburners in 1848 and the white intelligentsia.⁶⁰

Carl Schurz was a young '48er—a refugee from the failed German revolutions of 1848 who had come to America and settled in Watertown, Wisconsin. He made his living as a lawyer, journalist, and as a lecturer on the professional

lecture circuit speaking on European politics. Schurz played a major role at the Chicago convention working with Gustave Koerner of Illinois to head off a threatened separate action by German-Americans aimed at stopping Edward Bates. Schurz was made a member of the Republican National Committee and proposed the setting up of a bureau of foreign-born speakers to go after the immigrant vote. Schurz was then put in charge of this bureau. Schurz corresponded from California to Connecticut to line up speakers for the bureau. His campaign speeches in reprint served as campaign literature for the German emigrant community in America. Schurz traveled over 21,000 miles during the campaign traveling from July to October. He spoke in Cleveland, throughout Illinois, in St. Louis, in Indiana, in New York, in Pennsylvania, and finally in his home state for the finale of the campaign.⁶¹

The German vote held the balance of power in 1860 in many states including Connecticut, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, and Wisconsin. Many Catholics and Lutherans remained Democrats—the name first attracted their allegiance when many emigrated from Germany during the 1840s and 1850s. Only the community of exiled revolutionaries voted solidly Republican. Schurz was one of the first major Republicans in the German community. Only in Illinois did Schurz sway enough votes to make a difference in the election. But the Republican leadership at the time attributed to Schurz a major role in Lincoln's election.⁶²

Although Lincoln did refuse to speak or campaign or even write position letters as Clay had done in 1844, he was kept busy following the progress of the campaign and offering suggestions to the Republican National Committee. He stayed up in Springfield on election night receiving election reports from around the country on a special telegraph wire. Reporters from the Republican press began dropping by Springfield to write human-interest stories on Lincoln and his wife. Mary Todd Lincoln was presented as a nineteenth-century version of Jacqueline Kennedy: poised, gracious, well educated, fluent in French, stylish, and so on.⁶³

Bell's main proxy candidate was party leader John Crittenden. Crittenden campaigned hard for Bell mostly in Kentucky and the other border states. Crittenden accused Breckinridge of being a disunionist, but said that Douglas was a "loyal, courageous Union man." Breckinridge was the candidate of the secessionists. In October 1860, he campaigned in Missouri and dined with Bates. He urged Bates to get Lincoln to make a soothing address. Bates tried to downplay Crittenden's fear of secession.⁶⁴

There were attempts by Lincoln's three opponents to reach fusion agreements in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island. The talks got more serious as the rumors as to the outcome grew grimmer for the opposition. No single candidate felt that they could afford to lose a single state unnecessarily to Lincoln. Seward quipped of the fusion movement in his own state that "[t]he more they unite, the more they won't carry it [New York]."⁶⁵

DOUGLAS AS STATESMAN

After a decade of trying as an ambitious politician, Stephen A. Douglas finally became a statesman as the Age of Douglas was coming to a close. Douglas predicted that Breckinridge would only carry South Carolina and Mississippi whereas Bell would take Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware. He predicted that he would carry Missouri, Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, Alabama, and Georgia in the South and hopefully enough states in the North to win the election. In retrospect, his optimism seems as naïve as did Fillmore's in 1856. But an integral part of being a politician is incurable optimism that tends to interpret ambiguous data in the best possible light.⁶⁶

Douglas was running against his Democratic opponents, as much if not more, than he was running against Lincoln. Douglas could afford to lose the presidency—he was only 47 and did not know how serious his health problems were, but he could not afford to lose control of the Democratic Party. If the secessionists captured the party he would either face a situation of civil war—a national disaster—or the peaceful disunion of the country. Peaceful disunion would mean that the Democrats would become the minority party in the United States for the foreseeable future. His only hope for ever being president was to establish himself as the leader of the main faction of a united party in a united country. In order to accomplish this he would have to take extraordinary measures. He became the first major party candidate to campaign for the presidency and he campaigned South as well as North.

Douglas left New York City on July 14 and spent a month campaigning in New England. Douglas claimed that Webster was a supporter of popular sovereignty. He defended his doctrine as the only defense against “irrepressible conflict” between sectional extremists in the North—Republicans—and the South—Breckinridge Democrats. Thus he positioned himself as the moderate centrist—a position he had to fight Bell for. In August, the *New York Times* editorialized that “[h]e cares nothing about his own personal success and comparatively little for the success of the Democratic party, as it stands at present. But he intends to crush out utterly and forever the Disunion Party, if it is in his power to do so.”⁶⁷

Many of Douglas's past financial supporters from the merchant class refused to back him in 1860 out of fear of provoking the South. Douglas was able to partially make up for this financial gap by his own campaigning and free publicity provided by others. In addition to Sheahan's campaign biography, two additional Douglas biographies appeared in 1860. Republican reprints of the 1858 Lincoln-Douglas debates gave publicity to Douglas at no expense to him. But Douglas was unhappy with this and charged Lincoln with making major editorial changes to the debate record, which Lincoln denied.⁶⁸

By August 1860, the *New York Times* was openly predicting Lincoln's victory and that “[w]e think it not at all unlikely that Mr. Douglas himself fully

shares this opinion.” Both, Rep. Anson Burlingame and Senator Henry Wilson reported that while in Boston, Douglas predicted that Lincoln would be elected. Douglas’s running mate, Herschel Johnson, had forebodings of disunion and was convinced that Lincoln would be elected.⁶⁹

The Republicans did to Douglas what the Democrats had done to Fremont in 1860: attempt to insinuate that the opposing nominee was secretly a Catholic. This was because after the death of his first wife, Douglas had married a Catholic woman as his second wife. The *Chicago Press and Tribune* opined that “Catholicism and Republicanism are as plainly incompatible as oil and water The nation needs no Jesuits in the White House.”⁷⁰ Revenge in politics is so sweet.

Douglas arrived in Virginia on August 25 at the start of his tour of the South. At Norfolk he spoke out against secession in response to a question from a Breckinridge elector. He said that the South would not be justified in seceding if Lincoln were elected and Lincoln would be justified in using force to prevent secession. His response became known as the Norfolk Doctrine. Douglas spoke against secession in Virginia, Maryland, and North Carolina during late August. His appearances probably helped the Bell ticket, which ended up carrying Virginia.

The Buchanan administration, acting through Jefferson Davis, proposed that Douglas, Bell, and Breckinridge all withdraw from the race in favor of a new compromise candidate. Bell and Breckinridge agreed, but Douglas refused. The first two had little to lose—neither had much prospect of winning the election and neither controlled a major party. Douglas was opposed to any fusion agreement with Breckinridge and said so publicly at a campaign barbecue outside New York City. He ended up reaching a fusion agreement for Bell in New York, but that was it.⁷¹

Although Douglas felt that he was the only Democrat who could beat Lincoln, his running mate was not so sure. Johnson predicted that Douglas would not carry a single Southern state—meaning that Lincoln would win. The news of Republican victories in state elections in Pennsylvania, Indiana, and Ohio made things look bad for Douglas. As a result, his people signed fusion agreements in several Eastern states. Douglas decided that the election was lost and he headed south to spend the last few weeks campaigning against secession in the Deep South. Douglas spoke in Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama. Douglas answered a hypothetical question about the election going to the House knowing full well that it had no chance of going there.⁷²

Although Breckinridge made a number of short remarks during the campaign, sometimes hinting at secession as a proper remedy for disregard of Southern rights, he made only one major speech during the campaign. This was at a giant barbecue at Henry Clay’s old estate of Ashland, now controlled by one of Clay’s sons, on September 5, 1860. There were between 8,000 and 15,000 people in attendance at the barbecue—estimates vary widely—and Breckinridge spoke

in a hoarse voice for three hours. The speech failed to end the charges of disunion made towards Breckinridge.⁷³

An interesting question in 1860 was if the election were to go to the House of Representatives, as it did in 1800, who would be elected? In this scenario, each House delegation consisting of the entire congressional delegation of the state casts a single vote based on the majority within the delegation. Most anticipated Lincoln carrying fifteen states, Breckinridge thirteen, Douglas one, with three states undetermined. Under this scenario, either Lincoln or Douglas could win depending on how these last three states voted. If the House could not reach a consensus between the two candidates, under the Constitution, the election would then go to the Senate. The Senate would choose a president from among the two leading vice-presidential candidates. In the Democratic Senate, Joseph Lane had a much better chance of being elected than did Hannibal Hamlin. But Montgomery Blair, soon to be Lincoln's postmaster general, was convinced that the House would elect Breckinridge if the election ever went to it.⁷⁴

The Republican campaign strategy was to target swing voters in the pivotal states of the lower North that Buchanan had won in 1856. National and state committees targeted speakers to where they could do the most good. Seward was in high demand in New England and the Northeast. In Indiana several conservative Republican celebrities were sent as speakers: Caleb Smith, Tom Corwin, and Frank Blair, and others.

In the short (32 page) campaign biography that John Locke Scripps wrote for the campaign, Lincoln, the former Deist freethinker, was presented as an orthodox Protestant Christian who attended church regularly and had no vices such as gambling, drinking, or swearing. Whereas, Douglas was normally portrayed in the Republican press as a gambler and a drunkard. Democrats tried to connect Lincoln to a Know Nothing lodge in Quincy, Illinois. Lincoln never bothered to issue a denial so as not to alienate nativist voters. Thus, Lincoln managed to attract both German-American and nativist voters. The Douglas press attacked Lincoln's penchant for telling vulgar jokes and unsuccessfully attempted to attack his reputation for integrity.⁷⁵

THE RESULTS

Lincoln won 39 percent of the popular vote—securing him 180 electoral votes. He won the electoral votes of all of the free states except for three in New Jersey. New Jersey law allowed the state to split its electoral vote—the only state with that provision. Douglas came in second with 29 percent of the popular vote, but only twelve electoral votes: three from New Jersey and nine from Missouri. Next came Breckinridge and Bell, but because of the fusion agreements it is impossible to determine their particular shares of the remaining 32 percent of the popular vote. Breckinridge carried all of the Deep South, Maryland and split New Jersey

with Douglas for a total of 72 electoral votes. Bell carried Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee for 39 electoral votes. Bell did very poorly in the lower North.

Lincoln had almost 1,865,000 popular votes—all but 26,388 of them in the free states. Those from the slave states were probably mainly from the western counties of Virginia—which split off in 1863 to form West Virginia and from Missouri. There were a total of 1,573,000 popular votes for the three opposition candidates in the free states and 1,249,000 in the slave states for a total of 2.8 million votes. But even if a single opposition candidate had received all of these votes, Lincoln still would have won the election because he would still have had a majority of the electoral vote. Due to the sectional nature of the Republicans, Lincoln had very few wasted popular votes. Nearly all of Douglas's popular votes—all those outside of Missouri and New Jersey—were wasted. Most of Bell's wasted popular votes were in Maryland, where the popular vote was very close. Breckinridge carried Maryland by only 722 votes out of 92,502 cast. The difference was less than the number of votes that Lincoln received in the state. Breckinridge had a fair number of wasted votes in Virginia, Tennessee, Kentucky, and California. Breckinridge had fairly evenly distributed vote with approximately 259,000 in the Deep South, 312,000 in the Upper South, and 279,000 in the free states. Much of the latter was on the west coast. Lincoln barely carried California and Oregon. But one of the most important results was that the two Unionist candidates, Douglas and Bell, won 55 percent of the popular vote in the slave states. Missouri had the most competitive vote—it was the only state in which all of the four main candidates carried at least one county.⁷⁶

Other than in Missouri, the vote was very regionalized. The Bell-Everett ticket won less than three percent of the total Northern vote and received more than that figure in only three free states: Massachusetts, Vermont, and California. Overall Bell ran 300,000 votes behind Fillmore in 1856. Breckinridge received five percent of the total vote in the free states and most of this was in California and Oregon, denying these two states to Douglas. That meant that in the free states, 92 percent of the vote was divided between two candidates—Lincoln and Douglas. Above the 41st parallel, the vote for Lincoln was over 60 percent and he lost only two dozen counties in this entire area. South of this parallel it was more competitive with Lincoln carrying Illinois and Indiana with barely 50 percent and even Ohio with only 52 percent. Overall, Lincoln won 54 percent of the vote in the free states and his popular vote was 37 percent larger than Fremont's had been. In the southern portions of these three states the vote was solidly for Douglas. Lincoln carried Oregon over Breckinridge by only 264 votes and California over Douglas by only 643 votes—so the divided ticket cost the Democrats in both of these states.

In the South it was slightly more complex with three of the candidates competitive. Lincoln received four percent of the vote in the Upper South—nearly all of it in the St. Louis area from German-Americans where he received 17,000 votes or a tenth of the total for the state. Douglas ended up with 12 percent of the popular vote in the South, roughly the same as the Free Soilers had in

the North in 1848. Much of this was in Louisiana, Georgia, and Alabama. Breckinridge lacked a majority in the first two of these and the opposition won a combined total of 45 percent in the third. So we can say that the North was de facto a two-party system in 1860, Missouri was a four-party system, and the South and the Pacific coast a three-party system.⁷⁷

Breckinridge's home state of Kentucky was very interesting. Breckinridge lost the state to Bell, who was from neighboring Tennessee. Breckinridge lost those counties in the state with the highest concentration of disunionist sentiment. He also carried three counties with a high percentage in which there were very few slaves but many poor whites. Bell, the winner in the state, carried 35 counties by a majority and 25 by a plurality. Breckinridge carried 36 counties. Bell won 45 percent of the popular vote, Breckinridge 36 percent, Douglas 18 percent and Lincoln only 1 percent.⁷⁸

Historians sometimes explain Lincoln as winning in 1860 because of his divided opposition. But even if the opposition had only put up a single candidate, Lincoln would have won by at least 169 to 134 votes in the Electoral College. And the opposition vote was so regionally divided that a single candidate probably would have resulted in more votes for Lincoln, especially if it had been Breckinridge. The early Republican Party managed to successfully fuse the evangelist piety of Whigs and Free Soilers, the economic interests of Whigs, the free labor ideology of Northern Whigs and Free Soilers, and the nativism of the American Party. Lincoln, did, however, run poorly in most of the larger cities with Chicago as a notable exception.⁷⁹

The old abolitionists and Free Soilers were quite happy with Lincoln as the nominee. Giddings, who had known Lincoln as a congressman when they messed together in Washington, vouched for his character to the movement. Even Gerrit Smith, who was ostensibly Lincoln's rival candidate for the presidency was happy with the choice the Republicans made. "I feel confident that in his heart he is an abolitionist." In June 1860, Smith was confidently predicting Lincoln's victory to Giddings. Smith even wrote a \$100 check for Lincoln's campaign fund.⁸⁰

When Lincoln was elected, most of the original Liberty men—all of whom except Chase, Smith, William Goodell, and Henry B. Stanton had retired from the political struggle—were ecstatic. Elizur Wright, Jr. had backed Lincoln for president, for this he was reprimanded by cantankerous old Beriah Green, the former theology lecturer and member of the Smith circle. "Thank God! Lincoln is chosen!" exclaimed Joshua Leavitt, the old editor of the *Emancipator*. "What a growth since 1840." Leavitt had been a Seward supporter after he became convinced in 1859 that Chase could not possibly win the nomination. John G. Whittier enthused, "The triumph of our principles—so long delayed. Well God has laid the great responsibility upon us! We must take it up & bear it."⁸¹

Even the Garrisonians embraced the Republican nominee, albeit with reluctance, in 1860. David Child and William Lloyd Garrison himself gave a nod to abolitionists who voted to do so for Lincoln. But a small group of

Garrisonians, led by Wendell Phillips and Stephen Foster and his wife, Abby Kelley Foster, believed in the righteousness of rejecting the lesser of two evils. Phillips referred to Lincoln as a “slavehound” because as a congressman he had supported the 1793 Fugitive Slave Law. This provoked a public written debate with Joshua Giddings in the pages of the *Ashtabula Sentinel*. Yet, after the election Phillips had the audacity to tell a crowd that “Lincoln is in *place*, but Garrison is in *power*.”⁸²

Now Smith and Goodell could retire from the electoral struggle, and they could concentrate on lobbying Lincoln to emancipate the slaves. And Lincoln and his party could begin worrying about the Southern threats of secession.

Part II

(1860–1865)

10

Secession and War

LINCOLN PREPARES FOR OFFICE

Lincoln had two tasks before he assumed office: to choose his cabinet and get his candidates to accept the offices selected for them, and to write his inaugural address. He started on the first task the day after the election. Lincoln's cabinet wish list written on that day included Seward, Chase, Bates, Montgomery Blair, Welles, Judd, and William Dayton. The Republican Party in 1860—and until after Lincoln's reelection in 1864—was more a coalition of factions than a united party. Lincoln wanted to appease all of the main factions by including all of his principal rivals as well as balancing the cabinet in both geographic terms and in terms of former party allegiance between Democrats and Whigs and between radicals on one hand and moderates and conservatives on the other. Seward, Bates, and Dayton were all former Whigs. Blair, Welles, and Judd represented the former Democrats who joined the party after 1854. Chase represented the Free Soil faction of the party. Because former Whigs provided about two-thirds of Lincoln's vote, Seward argued for an all-Whig cabinet. An all-Whig cabinet would be more likely to be deferential to Seward than a mixed cabinet would be as Seward had been the leading Northern Whig for the last eight years.¹

Lincoln seemed to build his cabinet on the “tent theory” later made famous by President Lyndon B. Johnson: it is better to have one's enemies in the tent pissing outward rather than outside pissing inward. Seward was Lincoln's first cabinet pick. Because of his seniority in the Republican Party and status as Lincoln's leading rival for the nomination, Lincoln decided to offer him the position of secretary of state. In the nineteenth century, the secretary of state handled not only foreign affairs but many other functions as well; the position

was the equivalent of both foreign minister and minister without portfolio or deputy premier in a parliamentary government.

Seward wanted a senior position for Charles F. Adams, who had allied himself with Seward after dropping out of the Free Democrats in 1853. Seward wanted him to be either the secretary of the Treasury or the secretary of the Navy. But Lincoln wanted the Treasury for Chase and Welles for the Navy position. Lincoln probably also did not feel that the former Free Soilers warranted more than one position in the cabinet and Chase already had that spoken for. Once Adams urged Seward to accept the position offered without him, so as to give the nation and Europeans confidence in the new administration, Seward accepted on December 28, 1860. Chase sent Seward a gracious note of congratulations. "The post is yours by right and you will honor the post. My best wishes go with you." Unfortunately for their future relationship, Seward did not reciprocate this gesture.²

Chase spent two days with Lincoln at Springfield. Chase grew to become impressed with the president-elect. Lincoln made his conditional offer of the Treasury to Chase, but the latter feigned a lack of interest in a cabinet position. Lincoln explained that the State Department would be his if Seward turned him down, but that as the senior person in the party Seward had the position by right.³

Lincoln was involved with Seward in an initial trial of strength. Seward wanted to play the role that Clay had played vis-à-vis Harrison and Tyler and that Seward himself had played in the Taylor administration. Weed suggested that the two meet in Auburn, New York, and when that was not acceptable, in some neutral location as if the two were equals. Lincoln would have none of it. Seward ended up going to Springfield to meet with Lincoln. Seward wished to have a veto over Lincoln's cabinet choices for the other posts. And while Lincoln was willing to listen to what Seward had to say about his choices, he was not prepared to give him a veto. Seward wanted to keep his enemies, especially former Democrats like Chase, out of the cabinet.

In addition to those listed above, Lincoln also felt it was necessary to include Simon Cameron of Pennsylvania and someone from Indiana in order to make good on promises made by his managers in Chicago. This was despite Lincoln's admonition before the convention not to make any binding promises. Cameron wanted the Treasury, but Lincoln did not dare put someone of Cameron's shady reputation in that post. So he offered Cameron the War Department, which the latter then grudgingly accepted. He would give Indiana whatever was left over after he filled the other cabinet positions that he considered more important. That meant probably the department of the interior.

By the time he left for Washington in mid-February 1861, Lincoln had only offered two cabinet positions—out of seven—and had them filled. Lincoln had early on decided to fill the two most important positions with Seward and Chase. Giddings had visited Lincoln in Springfield in December and urged him to appoint "authentic antislavery men" of the "old guard" to his cabinet, especially Chase. Giddings later took credit for Chase getting the position, but Lincoln had

already determined to give Chase a position so as to satisfy people like Giddings and all the abolitionists.⁴

Chase would, in a political career spanning thirty years, belong to some seven different parties.⁵ But he was a long-term member of only two parties as a politician: the Liberty Party and the Republicans. His seven years as a Liberty man were probably the most sincere in his political career. Chase was dedicated to two causes that he always managed to find compatible: antislavery and his own political advancement. Chase's only real hobby or leisure pursuit was chess. Consumed by grief over the premature deaths of three separate wives from illness or child-birth and of four of his six children who died in childhood, Chase immersed himself into his political career. This, combined with his religious upbringing made him pompous, arrogant, and self-righteous. Chase's closest political or personal friendships were with Gamaliel Bailey, who had died the previous year, and Charles Sumner. Chase and Sumner remained friends from 1847 until Chase's death in 1873. He also remained in correspondence with some of the abolitionists he had known from the Liberty Party such as Joshua Leavitt and Gerrit Smith.⁶

Bates visited the president-elect in Springfield on December 15, 1860. Lincoln explained that he wanted Seward for the top position, but if Seward declined it was his. In the meantime he could offer him a position as attorney general. On that bit of flattery Bates accepted.⁷

Cameron, after Chase, had had more political allegiances than any other member of the cabinet. He started out life as a poor printer and worked his way up to editor of several influential newspapers. He was a leader of the Pennsylvania Democratic Party from 1844 to 1856 and quit to join the Republicans only in order to further his own political career. He had served two terms in the Senate starting in 1844. After serving his first term he was not reelected. In 1855 he won support from Know Nothings for a Senate seat, but only managed to lockup the legislature so that no one was elected that year. In 1857 he was reelected by the Republicans and three rebel Democrats. Everyone was convinced that Cameron had bribed the three Democrats. Radical Republican Thaddeus Stevens of Pennsylvania, when asked of Cameron, replied, "Is Cameron an honest man? I don't think he would steal a red hot stove?" When Cameron complained about this remark, Stevens removed the qualification.⁸

Caleb Smith of Indiana was a former newspaper editor, lawyer, and railroad man who had served a few terms in Congress. Smith traded the support of the Indiana delegation to Leonard Swett and Judge Davis at the Chicago convention. This enabled him to get a cabinet position. Smith was appointed interior secretary.⁹

Lincoln wanted to offer one cabinet position to the South so as to have a national cabinet. His choice was John A. Gilmer, an old Whig from North Carolina who had served several terms in Congress and been an unsuccessful candidate for governor in 1856. Gilmer was unwilling to accept, considering the feeling toward Lincoln in his home state and in the South in general. So Lincoln

made the offer to Montgomery Blair to be his postmaster general. Blair was the oldest son of Francis P. Blair, Sr. of Maryland, an old Jacksonian Democrat who had sponsored Fremont for the presidency in 1856. Francis Blair was considered by many to be the brains of the Jackson administration. Montgomery was also the older brother of Frank Blair, one of Dred Scott's lawyers in the mid-1850s and leader of a faction of the Republican Party in Missouri. The Blairs in the mid-nineteenth century were a powerful two-state political clan comparable to the Rockefellers in the mid-twentieth century or the Bushes in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Frank had campaigned for Lincoln in 1858 and both Francis and Frank had visited Lincoln in Springfield in the late 1850s. In 1860 they had backed Bates for president. Francis Blair continued to own slaves until slavery was outlawed in Maryland in 1865. By getting one Blair, Lincoln got the whole clan behind him and he valued Francis Blair as a senior political advisor.¹⁰

Lincoln wanted a New England man for the last position in his cabinet. He had three choices: Charles F. Adams, who was Seward's top choice; Nathaniel Banks, who was Seward's second choice; and Gideon Welles, who was Lincoln's top choice and the man who got the job. Welles was an old Jacksonian Democrat who had switched to the Republicans with enthusiasm in 1856. As he had already filled an administrative position in the Navy department during the Mexican War, he was a good choice for the position of secretary of the Navy. Welles did not like Seward, whom he considered to be corrupt because of his association with Weed. Welles was the only cabinet member who, already in 1860, appreciated Lincoln's intellect. Most of the others considered themselves smarter than the president-elect and more qualified than him to fill his job.¹¹

Of the seven cabinet members Seward and Bates represented the old Whigs, Blair and Welles represented the former Democrats, Chase represented the abolitionists and Free Soilers, and Smith and Cameron represented payoffs for support in Chicago. Bates, Blair, and Welles represented the moderates/conservatives and Chase and Seward represented the radicals (although in reality Seward was a moderate on the slavery issue). In practice, Chase would prove to be the only representative of the Radical Republicans in Lincoln's cabinet. Of Lincoln's original wish list Norman Judd was vetoed by Mrs. Lincoln, who had always disliked him and was made ambassador to Prussia in Berlin; Dayton was appointed ambassador to Paris in France. Weed complained about having four Democrats and only three Whigs in the cabinet (counting Chase as a Democrat). Lincoln told him, "You seem to forget that I expect to be there; and counting me as a Whig, you see how nicely the cabinet would be balanced and ballasted." Weed spent two days in Springfield sparing with Lincoln after arriving uninvited on December 20 and failed to accomplish any of his mission of winning an all-Whig cabinet for Seward.¹²

Lincoln later explained to Chicago publisher Joseph Medill why he picked the cabinet that he did, "We needed the strongest men of the party in the Cabinet."¹³

In December 1861, Lincoln was forced to replace Cameron. Cameron had been involved with corruption in the War Department. In order to shield himself from the charges he had aligned himself with Chase and the Radicals and publicly crossed Lincoln. Edwin Stanton, a prominent trial lawyer, replaced him. Stanton was originally from a small town in Ohio but later moved to Pittsburgh and then Washington. He had snubbed Lincoln in the mid-1850s when Lincoln was associate counsel on a case that Stanton was the lead lawyer on. Stanton had been a Democrat all of his adult life, but was also a bit of a political opportunist. His father was an old abolitionist who had been an associate of Benjamin Lundy, who was Garrison's mentor. He had been partially raised by Chase's uncle, Philander Chase, and had known Chase for many years. He had been a Free Soiler in 1848 and he was a frequent visitor at the Bailey home in the early 1850s. But in 1856 he became a Buchanan supporter and moved to Washington. He was the attorney general in the closing months of the Buchanan administration as his political patron, Jeremiah Black, became secretary of war. He was a Breckinridge Democrat in 1860. After getting himself a legal job in the War Department, he attached himself to Chase. During his time in the Buchanan administration, he had also supplied information on secession and administration policy to Seward. Both Seward and Chase were happy to endorse Stanton to replace Cameron.

When General George C. McClellan arrived in Washington in July 1861, Stanton befriended him. The two would make fun of Lincoln and call him an "ape" and a "baboon." Word of this must have gotten back to Lincoln, as Stanton was not that discrete. But Lincoln was only concerned about getting a competent, hardworking administrator to run the war effort and did not care if the person liked him or not. That the two rivals supported him was also a plus.¹⁴

Lincoln's other task was writing his inaugural address. This was much more affected by current events than is usual for a new president as the Confederacy was in the process of forming. Lincoln wanted to deliver a message of both firmness and reassurance. He wanted to convince the South that there was no danger to it or its institutions—slavery principal among them—if they remained within the Union but they were guaranteed of war if they went through with secession. Lincoln had to balance finishing his inaugural address, dealing with patronage requests, and gaining the acceptance of those he had picked for his cabinet. Lincoln spent much of his time during the twelve-day train trip to Washington in February working on the inaugural. He then had Seward and Orville Browning, his old lawyer friend and Chicago manager, read his draft and make suggestions. Browning advised him to take out references to reclaiming federal property in the South.¹⁵

SECESSION 1861

By the time Lincoln assumed power in March 1861, the situation he encountered was completely different from what he prepared for and ran on in the election.

This was due to the secession of the cotton-producing states of the Deep South starting with South Carolina on December 20, 1860. The secession process began with the governor of South Carolina, William Gist, writing in October to the governors of the other cotton states to ascertain their interest in secession in response to Lincoln's election. Most replied that they wanted to secede in unison or hold a general Southern convention—similar to the Nashville convention in 1850—to decide what to do. Florida's governor replied that he would be willing to take the state out of the Union, but did not want to be the first.

Next, the governors of the different Southern states appointed "commissioners" to confer with one another and decide upon a common approach. The commissioners called for a Southern secession convention at Montgomery, Alabama, a small town with a combined population of about 9,000 black and white in 1860, for February 4 in order to give adequate time to form a new confederacy before Lincoln was inaugurated a month later. Alabama issued the invitations to all of the slave states.¹⁶

By January 8, the voters of six other cotton states had elected delegates to conventions to vote on secession. The conventions were all called within 23 days of Lincoln's election, except in Louisiana where a special session of the legislature was called to summon such a convention. A caucus of Southern senators in Washington on January 5 decided on secession as the only solution that they would recommend to their legislatures. They would then allow the legislatures to determine if they should resign from the U.S. Senate or remain in order to obstruct any legislation aimed at preventing the South from seceding. Jefferson Davis, the natural successor to John Calhoun, played a major role in the discussion. As the South's leading military hero he was a leading candidate for the role of either president of the new Confederacy or leader of its army.¹⁷

Most of the state conventions were closely balanced between secessionists and so-called cooperationists, that is, those wanting more cooperation and possibly a *casus belli* or act of war from the North before seceding. Between January 9 and February 1, the rest of the Deep South along the Gulf coast seceded. Once Texas seceded, Sam Houston had to be physically taken out of the governor's mansion as he refused to recognize the act.¹⁸

Three days after meeting in Montgomery on February 4, the delegates adopted a provisional constitution for the Confederate States of America (CSA). Two days after that, they elected Jefferson Davis and Alexander Stephens their president and vice president. On February 18 the pair were inaugurated. Only forty days after Mississippi seceded, a Southern Republic was born. Taking the U.S. Constitution as a starting document, the Confederate delegates had a new permanent constitution written and signed on March 16—less than a month after the inauguration. A new Confederate flag—the "stars and bars"—was unfurled on March 4 so that the Confederacy could steal some of the thunder away from Lincoln in Washington.¹⁹

But there were crucial differences between the cotton states of the Deep South on one hand and the other slave states of the Upper South on the other.

First, Texas with a black population of less than 40 percent of the total population had the lowest percentage of blacks of the cotton states. The Upper South averaged a slave component of 30 percent or less of the total population. Second, the Upper South states had close economic ties with the North. Third, in the Deep South states, Breckinridge outpolled his two rivals 220,000 to 171,000, whereas in the Upper South he trailed his two opponents 206,000 to 234,000. The secessionists enjoyed a series of straight victories for three months. From February 4 to April 15 they did not have a single success. Then it was only war that brought the secession of the Upper South.²⁰

Breckinridge attempted to call a convention of the states of the Upper South—North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, Missouri, Kentucky, Maryland, and Delaware—for February 13 to come up with a common plan of action in response to the secession of the Deep South. But this idea collapsed due to the opposition of both of Virginia's senators and one of North Carolina's.²¹

Greeley and the *New York Tribune* initially took a stance of "go in peace," supporting peaceful secession of the South. But this was largely tactical; Greeley did not want the North to make any concessions on slavery in order to keep the South in the Union. Greeley met with Lincoln in Springfield when his annual winter lecture tour took him there in mid-January 1861. He urged Lincoln not to make any concessions to the South. While Greeley was gone, Assistant Editor Charles Dana moved the *Tribune* away from the stance of peaceful secession to one of defending federal property with force. When Greeley returned to the *Tribune* office in late February 1861, the paper's masthead contained the following admonition: "NO COMPROMISE! NO CONCESSIONS TO TRAITORS! The Constitution As It Is." Greeley's absence was probably quite convenient for him as it allowed him to explain the change of policy without having to admit that he had personally changed it.²²

The true aggressive abolitionists, the Garrisonians, were advocating peaceful secession with no compromises for the South. In the pages of *The Liberator*, Garrison condemned all "Union-saving" compromises as "simply idiotic." Initially Garrison refused to take the threats seriously. And he had been advocating disunion for years as a means of purifying the North, if not exactly solving the slavery problem. Herndon wrote to his abolitionist friends in Boston to pass along the word that Lincoln was a man of "superior will and moral courage" who would "stand firm as a rock" during the crisis. Sumner gave him the same assurances. Garrison was just starting to make a breakthrough with the general public. In 1860, a national lecture company wanted to engage Garrison as a traveling lecturer, but due to failing health Garrison had to decline until well into 1861.²³

COMPROMISE FAILS

During the final months of the Buchanan administration there were a number of efforts in Congress and outside of it to pacify the South and prevent secession.

During this period William Seward rather than Lincoln functioned as the Republican leader. Initially the Republicans failed to take the secession threat seriously. They had heard all the threats before—in 1850 during the territorial debate, in 1856 during the election campaign, but this time was different because the South had not gotten its way. There was no pro-Southern compromise as in 1850 and, unlike Fremont, Lincoln had actually been elected. By the time Congress met for its December session on December 3, 1860, five Southern states had already called conventions to vote on secession. Buchanan, in his annual message to Congress, the State of the Union, had both declared secession to be illegal and declared that he had no power to prevent it. Chief Justice Roger Taney had the same opinion. “There is no rightful power to bring back by force the states into the Union.” Seward derided this as meaning, “no state has the right to secede unless it wishes to and it is the President’s duty to enforce the laws, unless somebody opposes him.”²⁴

Buchanan did make the suggestion to call a constitutional convention to formulate changes to the Constitution to appease the South. No one acted on Buchanan’s suggestion, or to be more accurate, they changed it slightly. Congress was called to take the place on this convention and recommend its own changes. Each house of Congress appointed its own committee to formulate suggestions: the House had its Committee of Thirty-Three—named because it had a representative from each state in the Union sitting on it. The Committee consisted of sixteen Republicans, fourteen Democrats, and three South Americans so that technically the opposition outnumbered the Republicans, but the former was the largest party on it. Charles F. Adams of Massachusetts was the leading Republican member of the Committee of Thirty-Three, but Chairman Thomas Corwin of Ohio and Henry Winter Davis, the leading American, were also important. This committee was appointed on December 14, 1860. The Senate made do with a slimmer Committee of Thirteen, which consisted of five Republicans, three Northern Democrats, four Southern Democrats—two from the Deep South and three from the Upper South, and Crittenden as an independent. It was appointed on December 20, the same day that South Carolina seceded from the Union. It included many of the leading figures in the Senate including Seward, Wade, Douglas, Jefferson Davis, Robert Hunter, and John J. Crittenden. Of these, Crittenden, Seward, and Douglas had the greatest influence.²⁵

Crittenden, an old Whig representing the Constitutional Unionists from Kentucky, took charge of crafting a compromise. Crittenden had long been acknowledged as the successor to Henry Clay both in Kentucky and among Southern Whigs. He was elected to the Senate five times and had filled out Clay’s Senate term during the Tyler administration. Crittenden made only two brief speeches during the first two weeks of the Senate session in December 1860. He thought that President Buchanan’s annual message to Congress, which concentrated on secession, constituted a “base surrender of the Union.”²⁶

Crittenden’s last major act in a long political career was to try and end the crisis and avoid civil war with an omnibus proposal of six constitutional

amendments and four congressional resolutions. The most important of the amendments were: a revival of the Missouri line of 1820 and its extension to the Pacific Ocean; no abolition of slavery on federal property in the South; no abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia as long as slavery existed in Maryland and Virginia; compensation to any slaveholder prevented from recovering fugitive slaves; no federal interference with interstate transportation of slaves; and the sixth amendment forbade any future amendment that would alter the previous five. The words “slave” and “slavery” that never appeared in the Constitution appeared fifteen times in the course of these six amendments. The idea was to cut out the ground from beneath free soil ideology. The resolutions concerned the “liberty laws” and Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 and would have been acceptable to the Republicans if the amendments would have been.²⁷

The Committee of Thirteen began its deliberations with the consociational rule of requiring a double majority of both Democrats and Republicans for any measure to pass. All five Republicans and two Southern Democrats voted against the package so that it was defeated seven to six. The various parts of Crittenden’s proposal were voted on separately with none receiving fewer than six votes and most receiving eight votes. After being defeated in the committee, the proposals were defeated when brought to the floor of the Senate by Crittenden on January 16 on a 25-23 vote with all 25 votes against cast by Republicans, and after being adopted in modified form by the Washington Peace Conference in February 1861 and referred to Congress. A version of the Crittenden Compromise was also defeated on a straight partisan vote in the Committee of Thirty-Three 17-14 with Davis and one other American abstaining. During the secession crisis, the Republicans were like the Western Europeans during the Danzig crisis of 1939—having been lied to repeatedly by aggressors, they were not ready for another compromise settlement. The two sections were completely alienated from one another. And public opinion in the North did not consider the Crittenden Compromise to be any compromise at all. If 1850 was a bad compromise, this was no compromise. Even if it had passed in the Congress, with the seven cotton states gone, only two Northern states failing to ratify the amendments would have killed the compromise.²⁸

Lincoln was kept informed of events in Congress by correspondence with members of his party. He kept in regular touch with Vice President-Elect Hannibal Hamlin, Seward, and Lyman Trumbull in the Senate, and with Thomas Corwin, the chairman of the Committee of Thirty-Three, and with Representatives Elihu Washburne and William Kellogg of Illinois. Lincoln began urging an end to compromise efforts in a letter to Trumbull on December 10, 1860.²⁹

A few days later, in a letter to Washburne Lincoln warned against territorial compromise and the Missouri line as well. Three times in four days Lincoln wrote to members of Congress. On December 22, a statement appeared in the *New York Tribune* authoritatively stating Lincoln’s position of no concessions on containment of slavery.³⁰

An editorial backing the Missouri line as a basis for compromise appeared in Weed's *Evening Journal* on Monday December 17, just before Weed visited Springfield on behalf of Seward to consult with Lincoln on cabinet positions. This was probably a trial balloon on Weed's part, independent of Seward, as the latter disavowed the proposals. Lincoln and Weed mainly discussed cabinet positions. Lincoln gave Weed three short resolutions to give to Seward to introduce in the Senate. By both voting against the Crittenden Compromise and accepting a place in Lincoln's cabinet, Seward was acknowledging the Illinoisan's leadership of the Republican Party.³¹

A Seward plan to let New Mexico into the Union as a slave state and Kansas as a free state was introduced into the House by Adams. Adams opposed the plan but was convinced that the South would reject it—which it did. This demonstrated the intransigence of the Deep South. Adams then voted against his own plan, it having done its trick. But Adams's willingness to compromise—even for tactical reasons—ended up costing him his friendship with Sumner.³²

Both Lincoln and Seward adopted a policy of no concessions on slavery in the territories. But there were several Radical Republicans in Congress who were even more opposed to compromise than Lincoln. Even without Lincoln's intervention there would have been a 3-2 Republican majority against the Crittenden Compromise. Democratic Senator Latham of California found the Republicans indifferent to the crisis. Five Republican senators were generally in favor of compromise. Before Lincoln intervened, the compromise element of the Republicans was represented by Seward, Weed, Sherman, and Charles F. Adams. Henry Adams was disgusted by the attitudes of the Republican legislative delegations from Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana.³³

The final attempt at reconciliation before Lincoln's inauguration was the Washington Peace Conference (also referred to as a convention) that took place at Willard's Hotel near the White House. The conference opened on February 4, the same day as the Confederate constitutional convention opened in Montgomery. The convention was the initiative of Virginia and was supported by Seward as a means to buy time until Lincoln could be inaugurated. He argued that no more states should secede as long as efforts continued to resolve the crisis. The conference consisted of delegations from the Upper South states that had not yet seceded, minus Arkansas, which refused to send a delegation, and from the North for a total of 21 states. The two states on the west coast did not send delegations because of distance, and the states of Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin also did not send delegations because their Republican legislatures were suspicious of the whole enterprise. Among the 133 delegates attending were a former president (Tyler), six former cabinet members, eleven former U.S. senators, fifty former congressmen, twelve state supreme court justices, and five former ambassadors. Twelve of the delegates were seventy years or above in age; thirty-four were at least sixty years old, and seventy-four were at least fifty, so that the convention was dubbed the "Old Man's Convention" by wags.

Former President John Tyler, who was 71, presided over the convention. Few prominent Democrats were present.

The convention produced two proposals that did not reach Congress for consideration until February 27. This was only four legislative days before the session ended. Both were voted down in the House after being referred there by a vote of 80-113. The first was a modified form of the Crittenden Compromise and the second would have required concurring Southern and Northern majorities in Congress before any new territories were acquired. A quarter million in the North had petitioned Congress to pass the proposals.³⁴

Seward had conspired with Virginia Unionists in order to bring about the Washington Conference. He spent much of January and February keeping Virginia from seceding. Many of the Northern states sent delegations to the conference for the specific purpose of thwarting any possible compromise. Former First Lady Julia Tyler wrote to her mother, "People are catching at straws . . . and look to the Peace Commissioners as if they possessed some divine power to restore harmony."³⁵

Seward also kept tabs on what was going on internally within the Buchanan administration through Attorney General Edwin Stanton who met with Seward on a daily basis to brief him on the events of the day. Stanton had become convinced that Confederate sympathizers were planning on seizing Washington and making it their capital. He contacted Seward with the information he had and agreed to supply him information on a regular basis. This was important as several members of the administration were actively aiding secession by transferring arms to the South where they could be seized by the secessionists or by supplying it with secret information. Buchanan's secretaries of war, navy, and the interior were all Southern sympathizers and traitors. For this service, which was done partly out of patriotic motives, Stanton was rewarded with the War Department after Cameron was fired a year later.³⁶

LINCOLN AND FORT SUMTER

Lincoln left Springfield, Illinois early in the morning on February 11, 1861, after making a short farewell speech to a crowd of well wishers. His train trip to Washington took twelve days. The next ten days—between his arrival and his inauguration—were probably the busiest in Lincoln's life. He had to finish selecting his cabinet or, more accurately, win acceptance from those he had previously selected. He also had to finish writing his inaugural address. And he had to deal with patronage seekers who wanted jobs for themselves or relatives.

Lincoln ended up conferring with the remaining members of his cabinet as mentioned previously. The most controversial was Chase. As a means of keeping Cameron out of the Treasury, Lincoln polled Republican senators on whom they preferred to see as the next secretary of that department. A majority chose Chase. So Lincoln won party support for his original choice. The difficulty was because

both Chase and Seward were determined to exclude one another from the cabinet. Seward threatened in a private letter to Lincoln to resign from the cabinet unless Chase was excluded. Lincoln simply called Seward's bluff by refusing to back down, and in a private note asked him to reconsider. Seward was forced to back down and withdraw his threat. Lincoln and Seward soon bonded and Seward became the one cabinet member that Lincoln could trust completely.³⁷

Lincoln attempted to do three things with his First Inaugural Address. First, reassure the South as to his peaceful intent and intention not to interfere with slavery in the South. Second, make a symbolic assertion of federal authorities. Third, indicate that he would waive the de facto operation of federal jurisdiction in the states that had seceded until it could be renewed with Southern consent in the future. To that end he indicated that customs duties would be collected by American naval ships sitting outside Southern ports. A North Carolina editor studied the inaugural address and concluded that in practice Lincoln occupied the same ground as Buchanan. "It is not a war message . . . It deprecates war, and bloodshed, and it pleads for the Union." Lincoln abandoned plans to retake federal property taken over by the secessionists and changed his inaugural address to reflect this change upon advice from Seward and others. The *New York Times* dubbed Lincoln's reconstruction policy to be "masterly inactivity."³⁸

The only real difference between Buchanan and Lincoln in practice was that Lincoln was willing to resupply garrisons manning federal forts in the Confederacy. There were two forts that were in contention between the United States and the CSA: Ft. Sumter in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina and Fort Pickens outside Pensacola in the Florida panhandle. The policy of the Buchanan administration was to neither resupply, nor reinforce nor surrender the forts. Buchanan had made a truce with the governors of both Florida and South Carolina under which the status quo at the forts would not be altered as long as they were not attacked. Buchanan's policy was designed to allow him to exit the White House without being responsible for having started a war.³⁹

Lincoln's first forty days in office dealt with satisfying patronage seekers and deciding what to do about the two federal forts in Confederate territory. Initially Lincoln seemed to be devoting more time to the former than to the latter. Lincoln told Seward that he felt like an innkeeper who "was too busy letting rooms at one end of the house to put out the fire in the other end." This patronage would help cement Lincoln's position within the party and ensure that he had solid support in the North when various Radical Republicans attempted to replace him with another candidate on the ticket in 1864 out of frustration with the war effort.

Lincoln often used friends to gather political intelligence for him. As Illinois was a state with many Southerners living in it, Lincoln had many friends or acquaintances who had grown up in the South, unlike Lincoln who was merely born there. In March Lincoln turned to two of them to ascertain if there was any Unionist sentiment in Charleston or South Carolina as a whole. The two were S.A. Hurlbut, a native of Charleston, and Ward Lamon, a native Virginian. Hurlbut returned from Charleston to report to Lincoln that there was no Unionist

sentiment at all in South Carolina. Hurlbut wrote out a sixteen-page report with four important conclusions: First, Unionism was dead in Charleston and throughout the Confederacy as a whole. Second, a mere provisioning expedition would be fired upon. Third, that if Sumter was abandoned, the CSA would demand that the North give up the Florida forts as well. Fourth, any attempt to enforce federal jurisdiction in the South would lead to uniting the Confederacy and dividing the North. Seward had been giving assurances to the Confederate commissioners in Washington through intermediaries that Ft. Sumter was soon to be evacuated. Seward, in a desperation to buy time, went as far as lying that a decision to evacuate Ft. Sumter had been made by the cabinet. He had promised that Ft. Sumter would be abandoned by March 20. These rumors had made their way North and Republicans in Ohio blamed the loss of a state election in March to the belief that Ft. Sumter was soon to be abandoned.⁴⁰

Initially Lincoln and Blair had been the hawks in the cabinet on Ft. Sumter with the former more committed to holding it than Chase. But by the end of the month, sentiment had shifted and everyone in the cabinet except Seward and Secretary of the Interior Caleb Smith, a political lightweight, were in favor of holding the fort. Chase and Welles both thought that provisioning would result in war, but favored it nonetheless. Lincoln had offered to John Baldwin on the Virginia convention to abandon Ft. Sumter if the Unionists would adjourn the state convention in Virginia and thereby remove the threat of secession by the most influential state in the Upper South. Lincoln considered the Virginia Unionists to be “white crows,” that is, an oxymoron. “Yes,” Lincoln exclaimed, “your Virginia people are good Unionists, but it is always with an if!”⁴¹

Lincoln attempted to reinforce the garrison at Ft. Pickens, commanded by a lieutenant, by sending 200 troops by ship to the fort. But the commander of the ship refused to disembark the soldiers without a specific order from Lincoln or Welles as his last order from President Buchanan had been to maintain the truce. So the troops were never landed.⁴² Both Seward and Welles prepared to send relief supplies to Ft. Sumter, without the other’s knowledge, resulting in both delay and mistrust. As a result, Welles would distrust Seward until late 1862 when Seward came under attack from both Chase and Stanton, both of whom Welles despised.

With his inauguration on February 16, President Jefferson Davis of the CSA began organizing the Confederacy as a separate nation even as the constitutional convention continued to write the permanent constitution. Davis began by picking diplomats to serve as ambassadors to Britain and France. In late February, Davis began appointing senior officers for the Confederate army. Before departing to Washington he had taken careful notes from a directory of the U.S. Army at the Library of Congress. On March 9, Davis sent out his requests to the various states of the Confederacy for volunteers for the Confederate army. His requests totaled some 7,700 volunteers and he began planning on dispatching them to the frontiers of the nation. On March 18, two days after the constitution was signed, a bill was passed to begin construction of a Confederate navy.⁴³

Next, Davis had the governors conduct an inventory of all of the military firearms in their states. Many of the 300,000 guns dated back to the War of 1812. It was later found that the Confederacy had 200,000 shoulder arms—muskets and rifles—but only 15,000 of these were modern percussion military rifles as opposed to flintlocks. The South had a million rounds of ammunition, but only a quarter of a million percussion caps to fire that ammunition with. The only artillery dated from the War of 1812. There was no rifle-making machinery in the Confederacy and only one cannon foundry suitable for forging cannon tubes.⁴⁴

Davis believed that war with the North was inevitable unless the Upper South also succeeded, because without the Upper South—especially Virginia—the South would be too weak to deter the North. With the failure of secession in the Upper South during February and March, Davis probably figured that he needed an attack on Ft. Sumter to unite the South within the Confederacy. Such a union would give the Confederacy access to the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry that John Brown attempted to capture. Davis would need that arsenal to equip his army.⁴⁵

For Davis, Ft. Sumter became a matter for the Confederacy rather than South Carolina to handle. On January 9, the *Star of the West* supply ship had arrived at Ft. Sumter and been fired upon by the Carolinians without Major Robert Anderson responding. It had been sent to offload supplies and 200 troops. These could have been the first shots of the Civil War, but Anderson, not having been informed of the ship's expected arrival, refrained from firing from lack of information. Davis began sending gun powder and cannon ammunition to Charleston, without knowing precisely what size guns were in the city, so that when the moment came the Confederacy would be able to subdue the fort. He also warned Governor Francis Pickens not to attack prematurely, as he was worried about the prestige of the Confederacy if an attack failed. After Lincoln warned Governor Pickens through a messenger on April 6 that he intended to resupply Ft. Sumter with food and water only by sea, Davis convened the Confederate cabinet on April 9, 1861. It decided to issue an ultimatum to Major Anderson to surrender the fort and, if he refused, to begin an artillery bombardment of the fort so that it would surrender before the provisions would arrive. This decision was made exactly four years to the day before the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox.⁴⁶

On April 1, Seward sent a rather interesting memorandum, entitled *Some Thoughts for the President's Consideration*, to President Lincoln. It began, "We are at the end of a month's administration and yet without a policy either foreign or domestic." Seward criticized Lincoln for spending too much time dealing with patronage issues and not enough focusing on a solution to the secession crisis. He advocated making the response to the Confederacy center around saving the Union rather than around slavery. And he urged making the stand over Ft. Pickens rather than over Ft. Sumter. But the most interesting piece of advice was for Lincoln to provoke a foreign war with either France or Spain or both in order to reunite the country and save the Union. Seward advocated

making diplomatic *de marches* to both countries over their actions in the Caribbean—France in Haiti and Spain in Santo Domingo (both on Hispaniola)—as a trigger for a diplomatic crisis and possible war. Seward suggested that Lincoln empower him with the execution of whatever policy was determined upon. Seward ended the memo by claiming that “I neither seek to assume or evade responsibility.” This was Seward’s last bid within the cabinet to assume the role of premier. Historian David Potter sums it up as “evacuation, foreign war, and partial abdication all wrapped up . . . in one neat package.”⁴⁷

Lincoln prepared a written response to Seward’s memo, but probably only filed it without sending a copy to Seward. He probably used it as the basis for an oral conversation with Seward. In his written reply, Lincoln argued that he did have a policy as announced in his inaugural address and that he intended to carry it out. He also asserted that he would be the person in the administration responsible for making policy. Seward’s most recent biographer defends the memo as an attempt by Seward to jar the president into paying more attention to policy and less time to minor appointments—patronage. He argues that Seward did not really expect nor want a foreign war—he was a quasi-pacifist—but merely a foreign crisis to unite the country behind the Monroe Doctrine.⁴⁸

Lincoln had dispatched Gustavus Fox, a former lieutenant in the Navy and expert on coastal defense, to Charleston to inspect the fortifications and see if a relief expedition for resupply by sea was feasible. Fox, who also happened to be Montgomery Blair’s brother-in-law, reported that it was. Because of the fiasco with the *Powhatan*, which both Welles and Seward had tasked to separate expeditions, the Fox expedition, organized by Welles and Cameron to resupply Sumter, did not sail until April 9.⁴⁹

Fox did not arrive off Charleston until April 12. That morning at 4:30, the Confederate batteries in Charleston under the command of General Pierre Beauregard opened fire on Ft. Sumter. The bombardment continued for some 33 hours and involved some 5,000 shells on both sides. Finally, on April 14, Anderson surrendered. He had miraculously suffered no casualties but his ammunition supply was nearly exhausted and the barracks in the fort were on fire. Seward’s requisitioning of the *Powhatan* had delayed Fox’s arrival long enough so that he was unable to supply Anderson, which was probably just as well as his situation was hopeless. Anderson’s gunners had fired back about a thousand rounds without doing much damage to their opponents.⁵⁰

Historian James M. McPherson has identified three separate “schools” of opinion among both contemporaries and historians regarding Lincoln’s motives in resupplying Ft. Sumter in April 1861. The first held that Lincoln deliberately manipulated the South into firing the first shot so as to preserve Lincoln’s administration and unite the North. This one was long favored by Southern historians. Second, that Lincoln wanted peace but feared that giving up Ft. Sumter would discredit his administration and bolster the Confederacy. Lincoln wanted peace, but was willing to risk war and either way he won. This was most identified with James G. Randall and David M. Potter. The third

was that Lincoln wanted peace but probably expected the Confederacy to open fire—and either way he won. This explanation is most identified with Kenneth Stampp. The differences between opinions two and three are subtle. McPherson feels that opinion three is the most plausible. But without any Lincoln memoir or detailed memorandum, it is merely guesswork.⁵¹

Blaming Lincoln for the Civil War is like blaming Neville Chamberlain and the French appeasers for World War II. They played a role, but this explanation avoids those responsible for putting the events into motion. If Lincoln and the North were guilty, then the Western Europeans were guilty for not having sufficiently appeased Hitler over Danzig.

For Lincoln the war was about the legitimacy and future of representative government. Lincoln believed that he was legitimately elected. He had committed himself to obeying the Constitution and the laws. Now, the losers who asserted their right to break up the Union in order to avoid the consequences of that election opposed him. The South believed that if it was to remain a part of the Union it had to dominate it. If it could not dominate, it had to leave. This was both a constitutional right and a revolutionary right. For Lincoln this meant the failure of the United States as the world's first modern experiment in democratic self-rule. For him it was neither constitutional nor revolutionary, as the South had no just cause for leaving. The "central idea [of the Union] is the necessity of proving that popular government is not an absurdity. We must settle this question now, whether in a free government the minority have the right to break up the government whenever they choose."⁵² He was not only preserving the Union but also preserving democracy for mankind.

Eighteen sixty-one was America's 1914: everyone underestimated the danger of war and thought that if war came it would be short, quick, and limited. In early April, Seward told the *London Times* correspondent, William Russell, that the whole crisis would not last three months more. No one imagined the awful carnage that would occur or that it would go on for four years. The fire-eaters thought that attacking Ft. Sumter would unite the South and divide the North. Lincoln thought the opposite. In reality, it united both sides. Lincoln had informed members of the Virginia convention that any attempt to seize the forts would mean war. Both Davis and Lincoln wanted peace—Davis wanted it between two separate countries, Lincoln wanted it within one united country.⁵³

The Politics of War

INTRODUCTION

While the Confederacy attempted to run itself on the nonparty basis, the United States had even more politics than normal during the Civil War. There were several different dynamics or areas of political activity at work. First, interparty competition between the Democrats and Republicans continued with all scheduled elections occurring as if there were no war taking place. Second, within the Democratic Party there was a fight between the War Democrats, the supporters of the war effort, and the Peace Democrats or Copperheads, the faction that wanted to make peace with the Confederacy. The tension really broke out after the issuing of the Emancipation Proclamation by Lincoln in September 1862, when it became clear that the war aims of the Union had shifted. The tension reached its peak in 1863 and 1864 during the presidential election campaign. Third, the struggle between the Congress and the Executive for control over the war strategy, which in reality was a struggle between the Radical Republicans and the moderates and conservatives over the future of the Republican Party. Fourth, was the struggle between Lincoln and the professional military and political generals to determine the military strategy of the North. And last was the struggle within the Lincoln administration for dominance within the cabinet. All of these struggles interacted with one another with each affecting the others. And all of these struggles affected and were affected by the mega-struggle between the North and the South to determine if America was one nation or two.

LINCOLN AND THE WAR

On April 15, 1861, Lincoln issued a call for the states of the Union to supply him with 75,000 men for three months in order to put down the rebellion. This call in turn precipitated the secession of the Upper South in April and May starting with Virginia. Virginia brought with it heavy industry including an iron foundry in Richmond capable of casting artillery and the South's most promising officer, Robert E. Lee, who had already turned down command of the Union Army. Arkansas left the Union on May 6, with its governor also having jumped the gun to make military arrangements with the Confederacy. North Carolina and Tennessee followed Arkansas out of the Union in May. So that by the end of the month, the Confederacy numbered eleven states. Both Virginia and Tennessee contained large areas that had relatively few slaves and were opposed to secession. Both areas would prove crucial to Northern military strategy during the war.¹

The border states were an immediate issue for Lincoln. If Maryland seceded, Washington would have been surrounded and very vulnerable to capture. Lincoln had to either keep Maryland in the Union or evacuate the capital and move it to a city farther north. Lincoln chose to remain in Washington and keep a southern city as the Northern capital. Delaware did not have a problem with Lincoln's call for volunteers. Kentucky declared its neutrality in the dispute between the two sections, which was acceptable to Lincoln in the short-term. Kentucky eventually rejoined the Union in September when it was invaded by a Confederate army and then counterinvaded by an army of Illinois volunteers. But because Polk invaded first, the South had the stigma of being the aggressor. As a result, some 60 percent of the Kentuckians who fought in the Civil War fought for the Union. In both Maryland and Missouri the reverse was true with a majority fighting for the South.²

The first Northern casualties occurred in Baltimore. On April 19 rioters attacked the Sixth Massachusetts Regiment while it was passing through Baltimore. The troops were forced to open fire in self-defense as a number of rioters were armed with pistols that they fired at the troops. Ten or twelve civilians—accounts vary—were killed and scores wounded and the Sixth had 36 wounded and 4 killed in the first real battle of the Civil War. As a result of this the railroad bridges connecting Baltimore to Washington were burned so as to prevent any more troops being sent through the city.

Three days later, hundreds of government clerks, military and naval officers left the federal capital and moved into Virginia to volunteer their services to the Confederacy. General Benjamin Butler, a Massachusetts Democrat who would soon turn Republican and a political general, rerouted his Eighth Massachusetts Regiment around Baltimore and into Annapolis by ship. Eventually both his regiment and the New York Seventh Regiment made it to Washington from Annapolis.³

The governor called the legislature into session and it refused to vote for secession but instead declared its neutrality in the war. In June 1861, a special

congressional election was held for Maryland and Unionists ended up winning all six seats. The state ended up organizing four battalions of volunteers for the Union, whereas those who wanted to fight for the South had to cross into Virginia and volunteer.

The Union officers in Baltimore and elsewhere in the state began arresting suspected Confederates. One of these, a wealthy landowner and member of a Confederate cavalry unit, filed for a writ of habeas corpus. The judge hearing the case was none other than Chief Justice Roger Taney of Dred Scott fame. He ordered that the Army show good cause for the arrest of the suspect or release him. The officer refused, citing Lincoln's suspension of habeas corpus over parts of Maryland on April 27. Lincoln refused to bow to the judgements of Taney, whom Lincoln held partly responsible for starting the war with his rulings, and Taney was unable to enforce his decisions. The rule of the Supreme Court was in large measure suspended until late 1864 when Taney died and was replaced by Salmon Chase as chief justice.

After the South won the first major battle of the Civil War at Manassas/Bull Run on July 21, the secessionists in Maryland grew bolder. With reports of an imminent Confederate invasion of Maryland, insurrection in Baltimore, and the danger of the legislature voting for secession in September, Lincoln decided to take drastic steps. He had federal troops seal off Frederick, Maryland, where the legislature was meeting on September 17, and had 31 secessionist members arrested along with many other suspected accomplices including the mayor of Baltimore. The legislators were held for two months until a new legislature was elected in November. The Unionists scored a major victory at the polls and Lincoln began to release the political prisoners in increments with the first released in December 1861 and the last released a year later.⁴

In the opening days of the war the rebels captured both Harper's Ferry and the Norfolk Navy Yard giving the South badly needed military facilities for the creation of both a navy and an army. Harper's Ferry would change hands more than any other strategic location in the course of the war as Confederate and Union armies repeatedly invaded the area.⁵

In Missouri, all of the leading politicians in the state were pro-Southern. This included the governor, the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house, and a majority of the Democratic-controlled legislature. Governor Claiborne Jackson defiantly told Lincoln that he would not furnish any troops to be used against his fellow slave states. The leading Unionist in the state was Congressman Frank Blair. Blair had Captain Nathaniel Lyon appointed head of the U.S. arsenal in St. Louis, which housed some 60,000 muskets—the largest arsenal in any of the slave states. On May 9, Lyon captured the rebel camp in St. Louis with four regiments of German-American volunteers and two of regulars. The defeat had the effect of driving the secessionists out of the capital. By June 1861, Missouri was in a state of internal civil war, as regulars and Unionists held the capital and the northern third of the state and the secessionists held the southern two-thirds. Governor Jackson appointed Sterling Price, a former governor and general during

the Mexican War, as commander of the pro-Southern militia. Eventually the state would see the bloodiest guerrilla warfare of the Civil War.⁶

When the Civil War began, the commanding general of the Army was Winfield Scott. Scott had commanded some 14,000 American troops in Mexico during the Mexican War but when the Civil War began, he was 75-years old, obese, and in no shape to command in the field. General Scott wanted Halleck (after Lee refused) rather than McClellan to replace him as general in chief. Halleck had the good sense to take credit for the military victories of his subordinate generals such as Grant who captured Forts Henry and Donelson in February 1862. Lincoln, on his own initiative, then promoted Grant to major general because he had passed Lincoln's crucial pragmatic test of victory.⁷

More mid-ranking officers (majors, lieutenant colonels, and colonels) with active service in Mexico were from the South than from the North. The vast majority of these volunteered themselves for service with the Confederacy, although a few like Majors Robert Anderson and George Thomas remained loyal to the Union. The most prized officers in both the North and the South were West Point graduates who had active combat experience either in Mexico or fighting Indians on the western frontier or both. The curriculum at West Point in the antebellum period emphasized engineering, fortifications, and mathematics. Most officers were employed in civil engineering projects while in federal service constructing forts, roads, and bridges on the frontier. As a result, the two sides in the Civil War had many splendid engineers such as Robert E. Lee and George McClellan to choose from. The courses on military history and tactics at the U.S. Military Academy were taught by Dennis Mahan (father of naval historian and sea power theorist Alfred Thayer Mahan), who emphasized linear tactics from the Napoleonic era. The academy was expected to turn out competent junior officers and so naturally, the emphasis was placed on discipline and small unit tactics. More senior officers were expected to learn strategy on their own through private reading.

No branch of the Army was ready for war in 1861. No accurate military maps of the East even existed as the Army had employed its cartographic resources in the West. This gave an advantage to the South as most of the war was fought on its home turf and the Confederate armies could rely on soldiers with personal knowledge of the topography. This advantage was lacking for the North, and for the South when it invaded Pennsylvania in the summer of 1863.⁸

Abraham Lincoln, from April 1861 to March 1864, when he appointed Grant as general in chief, functioned like the chief of the general staff in directing operations. Lincoln was acting as the cabinet and president had both during the War of 1812 and the Mexican War. Lincoln spent his free time studying books on tactics and strategy that he checked out of the Library of Congress. Because by law the Library received a copy of every book published in the country, it had the country's best collection of books on strategy. The studiousness and diligence that Lincoln had once employed learning the law as a young man some thirty years before, or had employed in learning Euclid's geometry a decade before

while riding the circuit, he now applied to the study of the art of war. Because of Lincoln's analytical abilities, his devotion to the subject, and his need to study strategy as opposed to tactics, he soon had a better grasp of strategy than did most generals. As Lincoln's generals failed in the field, the president had even greater incentive to study war.

Lincoln treated senior officers' commissions as a form of military patronage to be given out in order to win political support for the war effort from both parties. Lincoln gave these political generals a chance to prove themselves in the field and treated them on par with professional officers. Those who proved their competence and were successful were promoted; those who were not were generally given safe administrative commands or were sidelined without a command but continued to draw pay.

Lincoln's *modus operandi* when dealing with senior generals was to either visit them in their camps or call them into Washington to consult with them. For those in the West, he would attempt to send an observer whom he trusted in order to observe the general on a daily basis. Those he could visit personally, he would ask to produce their campaign plans. He would then examine the plans while they pored over the maps together and Lincoln would ask logical questions. Initially Lincoln deferred to the generals, but as he gained greater self-confidence he would begin making suggestions or even ordering the general to make changes in the plan. Lincoln did not attempt to dictate tactics to his generals or fight the battles for them from Washington. He gave more deference to those generals with a proven track record whom he considered to be competent.⁹

The biggest problem for the North was that unlike the South, it did not know who its best commanders were. One commander who looked especially promising was George McClellan. McClellan, like Lee, had finished second in his West Point class and had fought in Mexico. After the war he stayed on in the Army and was eventually sent to the Crimea as a military observer during the Crimean War. After that he quit the Army and went into civilian life as a civil engineer and eventually ended up as the president of a railroad in the Midwest. At the beginning of the war, McClellan was put in charge of the Department of the Ohio. With an army of 20,000 troops at his disposal, McClellan invaded western Virginia, which contained about 6,000 rebels, and in a campaign consisting of two minor battles, he conquered the area. This was about the same time that General Irwin McDowell, who was a good staff officer but had never commanded in the field, lost at First Manassas. Because he was the Union's only successful general in July 1861, McClellan was appointed to replace McDowell as commander of the Army of the Potomac. In November 1861, General Winfield Scott was forced to retire and was replaced by McClellan as general in chief.¹⁰

McClellan lasted longer than any other general in the East, in charge of the Army of the Potomac or the defenses of Washington from July 1861 to November 1862 when he was finally fired by Lincoln. McClellan had many fine qualities as an officer: he was industrious, detail-oriented, a superb organizer and trainer of troops, a very good engineer, and a fair strategist, but he had a number of fatal

flaws for an officer. First, he was insubordinate. McClellan developed a coterie of young officers who were dependent upon him for their promotions. These officers were all Democrats, West Pointers, who admired Mac. McClellan attempted to deal with Lincoln and the cabinet as equals—as if he were a private contractor rather than a federal employee.¹¹

But unlike Lee and nearly every great commander in military history, McClellan was risk adverse. McClellan also did not like the sight of casualties and was deeply affected by the sight of large numbers of dead and wounded during the Seven Days Battles in June 1862. These faults, all combined to give McClellan what Lincoln termed a case of the “slows.” Lincoln saw the positive side of McClellan’s split personality and attempted to work with it and ignore his negative qualities.¹²

During 1862 and 1863 Lincoln promoted and fired several generals as leaders of the Army of the Potomac starting in late June 1862. On June 26, 1862, he replaced McClellan with John Pope. Some two months later, after Pope had lost at Second Manassas, Lincoln fired Pope and brought back McClellan. In November 1862, he fired McClellan for the last time and replaced him with Ambrose Burnside. After the disastrous Battle of Fredericksburg in December 1862, Lincoln sacked Burnside the following month and replaced him with Joseph Hooker. Hooker was replaced with George Meade after losing to Lee at Chancellorsville in May 1863. Finally in March 1864, Grant was promoted to lieutenant general and made general in chief. Meade was left as commander of the Army of the Potomac—its tactical commander as opposed to Grant as its strategic commander. He remained in this position until the end of the war.

By chance, the top generals on the Union side (Grant, Sherman, Sheridan) all began the war in the West while the Confederates put their best generals in the most critical spots. During 1862 Lincoln began to suspect that Grant might be his most talented general, but he needed some talent in the West as well. Lincoln had few demands of his generals. He wanted them to be able to work with what they had. Lincoln came to like Grant because he never complained about never having enough troops but instead worked with what he had.

Fremont was the western equivalent of McClellan. He was appointed by Lincoln as the head of the Department of the Missouri. Lincoln gave Fremont *carte blanche* to operate and organize in the West. But Fremont, like McClellan, had a messianic complex, and did not realize that he was largely a political appointee. Fremont made four basic mistakes that by November 1861 had cost him his position. First, he quarreled with Frank Blair. Second, he surrounded himself with corrupt individuals who cheated the government. Third, he got ahead of government policy by issuing a general emancipation order freeing all of the slaves in Missouri in September and then refused to revoke it when Lincoln asked him to. Finally, he did a poor job in the field. Fremont refused to ask advice from his subordinates such as General David Hunter. Lincoln fired Fremont on October 24, and the order became effective when it reached him in the field on

November 2. Lincoln put Hunter in temporary command while he searched for a general to replace Fremont.¹³

Fremont's emancipation order made him a hero to both abolitionists and German-Americans, who tended to be antislavery. During the dispute in September and October about Fremont's emancipation order, abolitionist preachers in New York and Boston preached sermons against Lincoln. In January 1862, the Senate Committee on the Conduct of the War held hearings on Fremont. This won Fremont a second chance as head of the newly created Mountain Department in March 1862. Fremont had the misfortune of coming up against the best tactical infantry commander of the Confederacy, Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson, in the spring of 1862. During May and June 1862, Jackson marched his forces up and down the Shenandoah Valley defeating the separate forces commanded by Nathaniel Banks, James Shields, and Fremont that together outnumbered him two to one. In July 1862, Pope was put in command over Fremont and the latter resigned rather than take orders from a general whom he technically outranked and who was a West Pointer. Lincoln was relieved by the resignation and refused to give Fremont another command. The Radicals refused to back Fremont at this juncture as Pope was their new hero.¹⁴

In March 1862, Lincoln relieved McClellan of the position of general in chief but left him in charge of the Army of the Potomac. Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton, took over the daily functions of chief of the general staff but brought in an elderly general unfit for field service, Ethan Allen Hitchcock, to advise him and Lincoln on military matters. Unfortunately, Hitchcock had little interest in tactics and strategy.¹⁵

Stanton was both very hard working and a thorough civilian who delighted in bullying professional soldiers. This had the effect of counterbalancing Lincoln's early indulgence of generals like McClellan. Stanton was a protégé of Chase and was allied with the Radicals against Lincoln for control of the war effort. But Lincoln did not mind as Stanton worked hard and Lincoln had the final say. During an important battle, Lincoln practically lived at the telegraph office of the War Department so that he could receive the latest news and follow the course of the battle.¹⁶

In July 1862, Major General Halleck was the most successful Union general, largely because he was credited with the victories won by Grant and other generals. So Lincoln made him general in chief. Halleck lasted in this position for nearly two years until Grant took it over in March 1864. Lincoln wanted Halleck not only as his chief military aide and advisor, but as the top commander in the Army who would formulate strategy. Halleck functioned in this role as envisioned by Lincoln for his first two months until Pope lost the battle at Second Manassas. This was a turning point for Halleck—during it he suffered what was probably a minor nervous breakdown—and after it he abdicated all responsibility for the job of strategist. Lincoln saw Halleck as little more than a "first-rate clerk," but Grant trusted Halleck and retained him in this capacity after he took over as general in chief.¹⁷

By September 1862, Lincoln had started to judge his generals by a single standard—victory. If a general could not provide it Lincoln would look elsewhere, usually among the corps commanders of the Army of the Potomac or other armies.¹⁸ This gave the Radicals more room to play as they could use Stanton, Chase, and pressure from the Senate to advocate the advance of their favorite generals. But Lincoln ignored the input of the politicians and concentrated on the input of the subordinate generals.

LINCOLN, THE RADICALS, AND THE CABINET

Historian Hans Trefousse defined the Radicals as those Republicans who had earlier belonged to either the Liberty Party, the Free Soil Party, or those later Republicans who put the antislavery cause above their party allegiance. Salmon Chase and Owen Lovejoy were the only prominent Liberty men who became Republicans in Congress. But there were a number of former Free Soilers in Congress as well as former Democrats and Whigs who joined the Republicans and decided to oppose Lincoln from the left during the Civil War. The Radicals wanted control over two main aspects of war policy: the definition of the war aims and the promotion and demotion of generals. Where the moderates wanted slavery restriction, compensated and gradual emancipation, and colonization, the Radicals wanted uncompensated immediate emancipation, the confiscation of rebel property, recruitment of black soldiers, and civil rights for blacks including the franchise.¹⁹

Part of this political ambition came from the sudden windfall that the Radicals saw in the Civil War—suddenly they could contemplate the overthrow of the system of slavery in the South and emancipation of the slaves in a constitutional manner because of the war powers shared by the president and Congress. When war broke out, this was remembered by disciples of Adams including Joshua Giddings and Charles Sumner.²⁰ Because they were not responsible for running the war they did not have to consider the immediate political repercussions of their acts, such as the secession of the border states.

With the withdrawal of the Southern senators, the Radicals suddenly had control of the Senate. They did not control the House as completely, but could get legislation passed. Their instrument for the control of the war effort was the Joint Committee for the Conduct of the War created in December 1861. It was created by a wide vote in the Senate and without a vote in the House. The mission of the Committee was to “keep an anxious watchful eye over all the executive agents who are carrying on the war at the direction of the people.” The Radicals understood military affairs in the only way they knew how—politically. Generals were judged reliable or unreliable on a political basis—on party and faction affiliation. The Committee held hearings on the conduct of the war, which in the first two years meant examining why the North was repeatedly losing battles. These hearings resulted in generals being summoned to explain why they had

lost a battle and subordinates summoned to be questioned about the conduct of their commanders. This served to undermine military discipline.²¹

Zachariah Chandler was a master at manipulating the Senate to vote the way he wanted. Chandler had control over patronage for Michigan from Lincoln. Together he and Wade determined the policy of the Committee. The most radical member of the Committee was Congressman George W. Julian. Julian was a personal friend of abolitionists like Garrison, Phillips, and Lydia Marie Child.²²

As many of the professional officers from the Army were Democrats they were automatically suspect in the eyes of the Radicals. The Radicals hated the South and its aristocrats who made up the military class of officers in the Confederacy. Many of these Southern officers were West Point classmates and friends of these Northern officers. So these Democratic officers were suspect not only because of their political affiliation but also because of their past and present. The route to military promotion came in the form of political surrender and abasement in front of the Committee.

The Radicals experienced the same frustration that Lincoln did over the failure of Union generals to move against the South or to win when they did. The Radicals dealt with this by championing a series of different generals based on their political opinions. They first championed McClellan in July 1861, then Pope in 1862, and then after the Battle of Fredericksburg in December 1862, they focused on promoting General Joseph Hooker.

The Radicals were initially suspicious of Grant and the West's leading general was suspect for a year after the battle of Shiloh as a result. A prominent Pennsylvania Republican—probably either Stevens or Grow—went to Lincoln and complained that Grant was a drunkard, an incompetent, and a political liability. Lincoln simply told him, "I can't spare this man; he fights." Grant was defended in Congress by his original political sponsor, Congressman Elihu Washburne who praised Grant as being responsible for the victory at Shiloh. Chase wanted to replace Grant with Sherman in 1863, but his opinion of Grant changed after the victory at Vicksburg.²³

The Radicals' favorite generals were John Charles Fremont, Benjamin Butler, and David Hunter. These three generals shared two things in common: all three were primarily political generals and all supported emancipation. Secondarily, they all tended to be mediocre in their military skills. The Radicals were hostile toward McClellan, Grant, Sherman, and Meade. McClellan and Meade were under suspicion as Democrats, Sherman for having lived in the South and originally being sympathetic to it, and Grant for being apolitical. The generals that the Radicals were hostile toward were militarily on average much better than those they supported.²⁴

But on the other hand, the Radicals saw a prolonged war as useful for promoting a political and social revolution in the United States that would lead to black equality. The Democrats and their generals wanted a short war that would restore the *status quo ante*. Charles Sumner said, "I fear our victories more than our defeats. There must be more delay and more suffering We are

too victorious.” This is nearly identical to the sentiments of his friend, Wendell Phillips who prayed, “God grant us so many reverses that the government may learn its duty.”²⁵

Chase became the leading conduit into the cabinet for the Radicals. He started championing generals starting with Pope, after which he became an advocate of Hooker. Chase imagined himself a great strategist, without however, having put in the time that Lincoln had to master the subject. Lincoln would politely listen to Chase’s input on either strategy or promotions and use them as a way of discerning what the Radicals wanted. But Lincoln would trust more his own interrogations of officers and observations—as well as results on the battlefield—to determine whom to promote. Lincoln had a great deal of respect for Chase in financial matters and would listen to him and humor him as a means of retaining Chase’s financial expertise.²⁶

For Lincoln, his cabinet was much more an advisory and consultative body than a decision-making body. Cabinet meetings were normally held twice a week on Mondays and Thursdays, and special sessions could be called by Lincoln at short notice to discuss special topics. But under the pressure of the war, cabinet meetings became more irregular.²⁷ Lincoln often began cabinet meetings by reading some humorous story from the newspaper or a book of humor by a leading humorist in order to break the tension. Lincoln would then announce the subject of discussion and either elicit opinion from the members or simply announce a decision that he had already made.

Bates probably complained so much because he was not one of Lincoln’s inner circle of advisors consulted on a regular basis. Lincoln consulted Seward on a daily basis—after their initial rocky start the two made a mutual effort to cultivate the other’s friendship. And this proved easy as they had much in common despite their very different early lives. In addition to having a reasonably free hand in foreign policy, Seward was responsible for administering numerous other areas of policy such as the administrative detentions carried out in Maryland and elsewhere of Confederate sympathizers. Lincoln did not fear that Seward, unlike Chase or Stanton, would attempt to replace him as the party’s nominee. Besides discussions of policy, Lincoln liked to socialize with Seward.²⁸ Lincoln also consulted regularly with either Montgomery Blair or his father Francis. The two were considered by Lincoln to be good representatives of opinion in the border states. Lincoln would also consult frequently with Stanton on military matters. He did not consider Stanton to be a strategist, but rather, a very competent organizer and administrator. Lincoln gave Chase a rather free hand on financial matters at the Treasury. “Except in Treasury matters,” noted Chase, “my advice is seldom followed.”²⁹ But this was typical of Lincoln—outside of their particular cabinet responsibilities Lincoln did not rely on his members for advice, except for Seward and Blair.

The Radicals had two big opportunities to directly intervene in cabinet affairs through either Chase or the Committee or both. The first came in December 1862

when Ambrose Burnside's disastrous leadership at the Battle of Fredericksburg led the Committee to directly question Lincoln's competence to run the war effort. Chase had been "telling stories outside of school" on the inner workings of the administration to members of the Committee and he naturally blamed the problems on the influence of his rival Seward on Lincoln.

Earlier, before Second Manassas in August 1862, Chase and Stanton had circulated a petition in the cabinet to have McClellan replaced as the commander of the Army of the Potomac. Because both Blair and Welles refused to sign, Stanton refused to present the petition to Lincoln and the president never learned of the incident.³⁰

So, four months later, Chase was up for a second attempt to pressure Lincoln and this time his instrument was the Committee on the Conduct of the War rather than the cabinet. On December 16, 1862, the Senate passed a resolution written by the Committee calling for a "partial reconstruction" of the cabinet. The intended target was Seward. Removing either Bates or Blair would have been a bonus. The Senate wanted to refashion the cabinet into a British style cabinet in which formal votes would be taken if necessary. Ironically, this is not far from what Seward had intended eighteen months earlier when he saw himself as the "prime minister." Preston King informed Seward of what was going on. Seward immediately wrote out a letter of resignation and prevailed upon his oldest son Frederick, who served as Seward's chief assistant in the State Department, to resign as well. Seward then gave the letters to Lincoln.

Lincoln refused to accept Seward's resignation but pocketed the resignation letter. On December 18, Lincoln held a three-hour meeting with a group of nine senators representing the Senate, the Committee of Nine, led by Senator Jacob Collamer of Vermont. Collamer said that the cabinet should act as one unit, complained that all the senior generals were Democrats, and that antislavery generals like Fremont and Hunter "had been disgraced." Lincoln then called a cabinet meeting the next day and briefed the cabinet on his meeting with the senators. He also announced that the cabinet would meet with the Committee. Lincoln wanted to play the two bodies off against one another. Only Bates and Chase were opposed to this—Bates for legal reasons and Chase because he sensed danger.

The night meeting between the cabinet and the Committee was like an American version of the British parliamentary "question time" in the House of Commons. Both Blair and Bates defended Seward because they were both offended by the idea of Senate interference with the Executive. Everybody at the meeting knew that Chase was really responsible for bringing it about, but Lincoln wanted to flush him out. Chase, when put on the spot, ended up backing Lincoln and denying the truth of the statements that he had made privately to members of the Committee. This had the effect of discrediting him in the eyes of the Radicals in the Senate. Lincoln, after five hours of discussion, asked the Committee of Nine to take a vote on whether or not they still wanted Seward to resign. The vote was five against and four in favor.³¹

Chase was severely criticized in the New York press for his role in the affair. Welles went to see Lincoln the next morning and asked him to refuse Seward's letter of resignation. Stanton, Welles, and Blair, all went to Seward's house and each in turn advised him not to resign. That same morning Chase gave a letter of resignation to Lincoln who snatched it away with a laugh. "This cuts the Gordian knot, I can dispose of the subject now." Lincoln refused to accept either resignation and insisted that the two men remain in the cabinet, but he kept the letters for possible future use. In explaining to Senator Ira Harris of New York the new power that he wielded over his cabinet, he used one of his many incidents from his early life—this one related to the task of carrying pumpkins while riding on horseback. "I can ride on now. I've got a pumpkin in each end of my bag!" On December 23, 1862, Welles noted in his diary, "Seward comforts him, Chase he deems a necessity." Seward, in a mood of magnanimity, invited Chase to his house for dinner on Christmas Eve but Chase pleaded illness and declined.³²

Lincoln had originally insisted that his political rivals join the cabinet for two reasons. First, he wanted to represent and satisfy all factions of the party. Second, by doing this he could better manage his rivals by playing them off against one another.³³ Lincoln was not a highly organized or skilled administrator, never having served in an executive position. He operated on the basis of political instinct rather than any set of highly developed formal rules. He used the cabinet in an *ad hoc* rather than a systematic fashion in order to help him make up his own mind on issues, much as ordinary people use their friends and colleagues. Lincoln discussed the business of the other departments with Seward, leading Seward to meddle in their business, which in turn angered both Bates and Chase. Lincoln tolerated, and possibly even encouraged, friction between cabinet members in order to both stimulate better performance and creative thinking on one hand and his own control on the other. In at least three instances Lincoln used the collective wisdom of the cabinet to help formulate his own opinion and actions.³⁴

During Lincoln's first term there were five changes of cabinet members. The first came in January 1862 when Edwin Stanton replaced Simon Cameron as secretary of war. Ironically, it was Cameron's replacement, Edwin Stanton, who as a War Department legal advisor had written the offending paragraph that got Cameron fired. Cameron continued to back Lincoln politically and supported his reelection in 1864.³⁵

The next change was in late December 1862 when Lincoln appointed Caleb Smith, who was bored with his duties as secretary of the interior to a judgeship on the U.S. District Court of Indiana. Lincoln replaced him with his assistant, who was also an Indiana attorney, and used to ride the circuit with Lincoln. The third change was in June 1864 when Lincoln abruptly accepted Chase's offer of resignation after a minor patronage dispute between the two. The fourth change was in September 1864 when Montgomery Blair resigned from being head of the Post Office at Lincoln's request as part of a deal with the Radicals. The final change was the resignation of Bates as attorney general for reasons of age and health in late November 1864. So from March 1861 until June 1864 the only

changes were Stanton for Cameron and the loss of Smith, neither of which changed the dynamics of the cabinet.³⁶

One of Lincoln's greatest leadership traits was his lack of personal ego—as opposed to self-confidence. He did not hold political grudges. After an early political career in which he was a very partisan politician, Lincoln matured so that he was able to remain on good terms with his rivals both in other parties and in the Republican Party. Douglas pledged him his support before he died in 1861. Chase campaigned for Lincoln's reelection in the fall of 1864, despite having been outmaneuvered by Lincoln for the nomination. Blair remained loyal to Lincoln and his memory until the former's death. Bates had no hard feelings against Lincoln.

In the cabinet there were roughly three groups: Chase and Stanton on the left as the agents of the Radicals; Lincoln and Seward in the center as the moderates; Bates, Blair, and Welles on the right as the conservatives. This gave Lincoln and Seward room to maneuver to side with either group. Chase and Stanton were both despised by the conservatives and the feeling was reciprocated. By 1864, Stanton and Blair were no longer on speaking terms. Bates was considered a lightweight and a creature of the Blairs. Bates and Blair had little professional respect for each other, but they were ideologically compatible and Bates was too old to be a political threat to Frank Blair.³⁷ Welles became famous after his death for the delightful thumbnail sketches that he provided of his cabinet colleagues in his diary. He provided historians with a good knowledge of the dynamics of Lincoln's cabinet.³⁸

With the December 1862 cabinet crisis, Seward abruptly learned that he had lost his standing in the Republican Party and no longer enjoyed anywhere near the same level of support that he had enjoyed in 1859 and 1860. He could not hope to seriously contest with Lincoln for the nomination. This made him an even safer figure for Lincoln within the administration.³⁹ But Chase refused to learn the lessons of this incident. He would remain a threat.

The Road to Emancipation

INTRODUCTION

There is a basic division among Lincoln biographers/scholars and historians over whom to credit for the Emancipation Proclamation in September 1862/January 1863—Lincoln or the Radicals and abolitionists. Those who support crediting the latter argue that Lincoln showed his true sentiments regarding blacks during the 1858 senatorial campaign when he debated Stephen Douglas and argued against equal rights for blacks. Their Lincoln was slow to abandon the Whig Party because he was basically a conservative disciple of Henry Clay. When the Civil War began in April 1861, Lincoln did not immediately move to use his war powers to liberate the slaves. His given reason for fighting the war and his justification for the first year of the war was the restoration of the Union and the integrity of the democratic process through the enforcement of the election verdict of November 1860. He refused the urging of abolitionists to begin recruiting slaves into the Union Army for fear of creating a white backlash. And he countermanded Union generals such as Fremont and Hunter who did issue emancipation orders.

These historians argue that it was the constant lobbying of the abolitionists and Radicals and the heavy casualties and dire military situation that forced Lincoln to finally issue the proclamation in the fall of 1862 and to execute it on New Year's Day 1863. Depending on the historian, the credit for the Emancipation Proclamation goes primarily to Salmon Chase or Charles Sumner.

The counterargument is that Lincoln was a very skilled politician who had the same goals as at least the Radicals, if not the abolitionists, and that he knew

better than them what was necessary to win both abolition and the war. Lincoln was well aware of the fates of the Liberty and Free Soil Parties and did not want to see the Republican Party share their fate. Lincoln experienced firsthand the pain of defeat for holding unpopular views when he was basically forced to retire from Congress after a single term. He only became active again as a politician in order to oppose the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Lincoln sacrificed his own political ambitions in 1855 for the sake of Lyman Trumbull and the antislavery cause. Lincoln did not want to get ahead of the party consensus so as not to divide the party. With Washington surrounded by slave states he could not afford to antagonize the border states and risk their secession. The lobbying of the Radicals may have annoyed and irritated Lincoln more than it persuaded him.

As in many historical debates, there is much truth on both sides. So in order to add my meager contribution to this debate I will review what we know to be definitely true about Lincoln and his attitudes toward slavery and emancipation. From a young age Lincoln was antislavery. He was also an admirer of Whig leader Henry Clay, who was nominally antislavery but nevertheless a slaveholder himself, an opponent of political abolition and a supporter of colonization. Lincoln was also a supporter of colonization up to 1863. It was probably the collapse of his belief in colonization that led him to support abolition. This conversion occurred after Lincoln met with a group of black leaders and failed to convince them of the wisdom of colonization.

Lincoln's conversion was gradual. He decided to try emancipation in 1862 and was still attempting to carry out colonization a year later. Only after it was demonstrated that colonization was a failure did Lincoln become a complete convert to emancipation and equal rights. But the process of emancipation cannot be divorced from the military situation and the war itself. Only after Lincoln realized that the war would be a prolonged military effort did he move to effect emancipation. Possibly it could be argued that Robert E. Lee and the various Union generals in the East were the real authors of emancipation!

Lincoln may have removed Fremont from command in 1861, but there were multiple reasons for this, and he was restored to a new command a year later. Hunter was given several commands. No general was permanently penalized for supporting emancipation. It is impossible to know with any certainty what effect the lobbying of Radicals like Sumner and Wade and abolitionists like Gerrit Smith had on Lincoln.

THE MILITARY SITUATION IN 1862

The year 1862 began, as the previous year had ended, with victories by General Grant in Tennessee. Grant forced the surrender of Forts Henry and Donelson within a ten-day period in February 1862. In early April, Grant salvaged victory from the jaws of defeat after a surprise Confederate attack at Shiloh. The battle resulted in about 20,000 killed and wounded, about evenly distributed between

the two sides. This was nearly double the combined casualties from the leading battles up until then. During the next three years the losses at Shiloh would become typical of the battles, but no one North or South knew that then. Grant was branded a drunk and was under a cloud of suspicion for the next year.¹

In late April, Admiral David Farragut managed to silence the forts protecting New Orleans and capture the city. Benjamin Butler, a political general and former Democrat from Massachusetts, was appointed the military commander of the city. The North controlled the upper and the lower portions of the Mississippi River, but the Confederates held on to the center with their strongpoint at Vicksburg, Mississippi remaining in Confederate hands despite an attempt by Farragut to capture the city. But things were going well for the North in the West. On other fronts, Union advances were stalled in the spring of 1862.²

During 1862 the Confederate army expanded from 325,000 to 450,000 but lost some 75,000 men dead or wounded during the year for a net gain of some 50,000 men. Most of these were volunteers rather than conscripts.³

By May 1862, McClellan's army had approached to within ten miles of Richmond and could hear the church bells of that city. The South mobilized their troops and from June 25 to July 1, 1862, fought what became known as the Seven Days' Battles in the vicinity of Richmond. McClellan proved to be a very good defensive commander and several of these battles could be considered to be Union tactical victories in terms of losses. But the whole campaign was a strategic victory for the South. There were some 30,000 casualties in the week of battles—a number equal to those killed in all the battles in the West in the first half of 1862 including Shiloh. The main effect of the campaign was the wounding of Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston and his replacement by Robert E. Lee as the head general in the East. His performance over the next two years repeatedly demonstrated that this was a gain for the South.⁴

LINCOLN MOVES TOWARD EMANCIPATION

Senator Charles Sumner was the most publicly vocal in his calls for emancipation of any of the Radicals in 1861 and 1862. As soon as the war began, Sumner reminded Lincoln of John Quincy Adams's theory that his war powers as commander in chief gave the president the power to emancipate slaves in the course of ending a war. Lincoln resisted the suggestion as he felt that he could not afford to antagonize the four remaining slave states that had remained loyal to the Union or the many Northerners who would resist a war of liberation for blacks as opposed to one for the Union. After Lincoln's revocation of Fremont's emancipation order in September 1861, Sumner publicly called for abolition to be a war goal. Throughout October and November, Sumner gave a public lecture entitled "The Rebellion: Its Origin and Mainspring" in which he argued that slavery allowed Southern whites to make war against the United States. He called for the president to use his war powers and issue an emancipation proclamation.

According to Carl Schurz, the president “listened to him [Sumner] as the spokesman of the antislavery conscience.” Chase also had some influence, but Lincoln rightly suspected him of having a hidden political motive in everything he advocated. Because Sumner had no presidential ambitions and was already an influential senator he was not politically suspect in Lincoln’s eyes.⁵

Sumner complained in the Senate when Massachusetts Brigadier General Stone had fugitive slaves returned to their masters in March 1862. Congress reacted to the speech by passing a law prohibiting Union officers from doing this. In May 1862, he decided to take it one step further and complained about General Henry Halleck, commander in the West, prohibiting fugitive slaves from being admitted into his lines without his approval. Sumner argued that this order was “inconsistent, absurd, unconstitutional and inhuman.”⁶

Lincoln, who knew about political ambition firsthand, thought that Chase was “a little insane” on the subject of the presidency. Until Chase maneuvered to have Edwin Stanton appointed to replace Cameron as secretary of war in January 1862, Chase had no real allies in the cabinet once the war began. Chase had the following opinions of his fellow cabinet members: Cameron—corrupt; Bates—too conservative; Blair—a lightweight; Welles—well intentioned, slow, and incompetent. But Welles, who watched his fellow cabinet members with the jaundiced eye of a former journalist, wrote that “In aptness and skill, Mr Chase was never a match for Mr. Seward.” Lincoln appreciated Chase’s skills as a financial manipulator and administrator, but because of Chase’s intrigues with his fellow Radicals in Congress, Chase was remote from nonfinancial decision making after December 1862.⁷

In 1862, General David Hunter, who had been Fremont’s assistant and successor in Missouri, was in charge of all liberated territory along the Atlantic seacoast of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, known as the “Department of the South.” On May 9, 1862, he issued an order declaring all slaves in the three rebel states under his command to be “forever free” as slavery was incompatible with freedom. The order was published a week later and Democrats immediately began pressuring Lincoln to rescind it. Chase wrote to Lincoln in May 1862 asking him not to revoke General Hunter’s emancipation orders. Both Chase and Stanton assured Lincoln that 90 percent of Republicans supported the order. But if this were the case, several of the other 10 percent resided in Lincoln’s cabinet. Lincoln revoked the order on May 17, 1862. Anna Dickinson, the young abolitionist orator, declared that Lincoln “was not so far from a slave catcher after all.” But General George Meade, a Union corps commander under McClellan, congratulated Lincoln on the revocation.⁸

The only consistent backer of emancipation as an administration policy or a war aim within the cabinet in 1861 was Secretary of War, Simon Cameron. From mid-October 1861 Cameron started supporting emancipation and the use of black troops as a means to curry favor with the Radicals. This was probably in response to the Radical protest over the firing of Fremont for his emancipation order. Cameron, without consulting Lincoln, inserted a passage in his

department's annual report for 1861 stating that it was "as clearly a right of the Government to arm slaves, when it may become necessary, as it is to use gunpowder taken from the enemy." Even though the report was withdrawn and the passage edited out, the press got a hold of several copies of the original report—thereby creating political problems for Lincoln with Democrats and conservative Republicans. Lincoln sent an addendum to Cameron's order to General Thomas Sherman in the South Carolina Sea Islands ordering him not to arm troops for combat. By the end of the year, Lincoln maneuvered to have Cameron sent into political exile in St. Petersburg, Russia as ambassador to replace the abolitionist Cassius M. Clay. Cameron felt glad to get the job and remained a political supporter of Lincoln.⁹

In response to congressional pressure, Lincoln granted freedom to all run-away slaves in Union camps in December 1861 and stated that the Army would be responsible for their welfare. Senator Crittenden reintroduced his July resolution on war aims—stating that the war was being fought solely to reunite the Union—on December 4, 1861 and the Republican majority defeated it. The day before, in his annual message to Congress, Lincoln urged the acquisition of foreign territory by Congress in order to colonize slaves freed by the Confiscation Act of August 1861. By the end of the year antislavery demonstrations in Cincinnati, Ohio, were burning Lincoln's effigy for his resistance to emancipation. This was less than a quarter century after James Birney had to flee for his life from an antiabolitionist mob that Chase faced down.¹⁰

In the winter of 1862, the Smithsonian Institute sponsored its first ever public lecture series with most of the lecturers being abolitionists or Radicals. Horace Greeley, editor of the *New York Tribune*, was one of the first speakers and he spoke in favor of emancipation and confiscation of rebel property. Lincoln, Chase, and several Radical members of Congress were on the platform flanking Greeley as he spoke, as if in tacit endorsement of his message. Lincoln attended several of the lectures in the series. Abolitionists used another old tactic in 1861–62 in their drive for emancipation: petitions. Several petitions calling for both compensated and uncompensated emancipation were circulated once the war had begun. William Goodell, Gerrit Smith's old collaborator, headed up the National Emancipation Association, which circulated a petition calling for uncompensated emancipation. Abolitionists were upset that a new group of people who called themselves "emancipationists" were arguing for emancipation out of military necessity rather than out of humanitarian motives. It seems that humanitarians have always suspected those who choose to support their causes out of pragmatic motives rather than high-minded moral or religious ones. Many Union officers who advocated the use of black troops viewed them mainly as cannon fodder. Governor Israel Washburn of Maine asked, "Why are our leaders unwilling that Sambo should save white boys?"¹¹

On March 6, 1862, Lincoln introduced a bill for gradual compensated emancipation. The bill was rather modest as it would take place over several years. It called for paying up to \$300 per slave and called for the appropriation of

\$100,000 to finance colonization efforts abroad. It called on Congress to compensate any states that would introduce emancipation schemes voluntarily. Lincoln carefully monitored press reaction to his proposal. When the *New York Times*, which normally supported the administration, criticized the proposal because of the cost involved to the public, Lincoln took upon himself to set the editor, Henry Raymond, straight. Lincoln claimed that the cost of one day of warfare would pay for the emancipation of all of the slaves in Delaware and that the cost of compensation for all the slaves in the border states and the District of Columbia would be less than the cost of three months of war. But because the border states failed to enact any legislation in support of the proposal, it went nowhere despite having broad support in Congress. And abolitionists sneered at the idea of paying compensation for slaveholders, whom they regarded as thieves.¹²

Northern diplomats in Europe rejoiced when they learned of Lincoln's scheme. They predicted a major shift of European public opinion in favor of the North once the war became clearly about slavery. The English aristocracy was openly pro-Southern in their sentiments as they both recognized the Southern planter caste as fellow aristocrats and feared the spread of Northern democracy to Britain. England was the key to European support for the Confederacy. Emperor Napoleon III of France deferred to Britain on the issue of recognition of the Confederacy—he was willing to follow whatever policy England adopted. Russia was openly pro-Northern but relatively unimportant as it had little trade with either the Union or the Confederacy. No other European powers were relevant to the war. But because the cotton mills of Britain had a surplus of cotton in 1861–62, “King Cotton” was not as influential as it otherwise might have proven to have been.¹³

By June 1862, serious talk of British intervention in the Civil War in the form of a mediation initiative began. William Lindsay, a prominent English ship owner and member of parliament who was pro-Southern, was in favor of intervention and had extensively lobbied Emperor Napoleon III to support mediation. Lindsay introduced a motion for British mediation in the Commons but it did not come to a vote as both the government and the opposition opposed it.¹⁴

On April 16, 1862, the slaves in Washington D.C. were emancipated with compensation to the owners and were offered free steamship transport to either Haiti or Liberia as part of Lincoln's colonization effort. But few accepted the offer. Many of the former slaveowners rehired their former slaves to work for them for wages after emancipation. White Washingtonians formed the Freedmen's Relief Association to feed, cloth, and shelter former slaves who remained in Washington and to teach them basic literacy so as to render them employable. In June, Congress abolished slavery in the territories, which in practice only affected about a hundred slaves in New Mexico Territory. After the abolition in the District, abolitionists argued that Lincoln was moving in the right direction, only too slowly. “Well, it is something to get slavery abolished in ten square miles, after thirty years of arguing, remonstrating, and petitioning,”

remarked Lydia Marie Child to *The Liberator's* business agent as they sorted bills. Garrison saw it as the beginning of the end for slavery in America. But he declined to celebrate the act, because it involved both of Lincoln's pet concerns—compensation and colonization. But Wendell Phillips declared triumphantly, "Abraham Lincoln may not wish it; he cannot prevent it; the nation may not will it, but the nation can never prevent it." He continued, "Abraham Lincoln simply rules; John C. Fremont governs."¹⁵

Rep. George Julian of Indiana, the former Free Democrat vice-presidential candidate in 1852, submitted a bill in April 1862 to repeal the Fugitive Slave Acts of 1793 and 1850, but the effort died when Lincoln refused to support it. But at least federal policy now gutted the acts of any meaning. In March 1862, a second Confiscation Act was introduced into Congress that permitted the government to confiscate the property of rebels after 60 days if the rebels remained disloyal to the United States. Slaves would be emancipated and real property would be sold to help finance the costs of the war. On July 12, 1862, the bill passed in the Senate. At the same time as the Senate was passing the bill, Lincoln met with at least 25 representatives from the border states and said that he wanted to gradually emancipate their slaves with compensation. This would demonstrate to the Confederacy that they would never join and would help to convince the rebels to give up secession. Lincoln urged them to support this now while their slaves still had some value and Congress was inclined to compensate. But the members were not persuaded. On July 17, Lincoln sent a message to Congress on the slavery issue. Lincoln claimed that the ownership of rebel slaves could be legally transferred to the nation and then Congress could emancipate the slaves.¹⁶

Union commanders were unable to care for all of the runaway slaves who passed through Union lines in Louisiana and it was becoming a major problem for the Army. "I have no rations to issue to them. I have a great many more negroes in my camp now than I have whites," complained one commander. In Washington D.C., white prejudice against blacks increased as a result of abolition as blacks wandered around unemployed and were perceived by whites as a threat. By the summer of 1862, white gangs were attacking blacks with increasing frequency. So emancipation did involve real practical problems.¹⁷

On Monday July 21, 1862, Lincoln called a special cabinet meeting in the morning and announced the executive orders that he was issuing to implement the Confiscation Act. These were three: First, authorizing Union commanders to confiscate civilian property when it "may be necessary or convenient." Second, authorizing the use of blacks as laborers in Army camps. Third, authorizing compensation for loyal slaveholders whose slaves were accidentally confiscated.

A week previously, on Sunday July 13, Lincoln had informed Seward and Welles of his plan to issue the Emancipation Proclamation during a carriage ride to the funeral of one of Stanton's children. He did not ask for their opinion. On July 22, at the regular weekly cabinet meeting Lincoln announced his decision to issue the Emancipation Proclamation in the near future. He told the cabinet that he had made up his mind to issue the Proclamation and was only consulting them

on suggestions for the phrasing. Blair opposed the Proclamation on its face. Caleb Smith, the interior minister from Indiana, also opposed the Proclamation and threatened to quit in order to return home to fight it. But Lincoln did not take this threat seriously as Smith had already decided to leave and was a political lightweight in any case. Both members objected to the timing of the Proclamation as they feared that it would hurt the Republicans at the polls. Welles did not express an opinion but later loyally supported Lincoln in defending the Proclamation. Chase was opposed, not because he opposed emancipation, but rather, because he wanted military orders issued by Union commanders in their military districts. Welles suspected that Chase opposed the Proclamation as he feared that it would give Lincoln an advantage in 1864. Chase was also opposed both to compensated abolition on principle and to colonization, because he was a former abolitionist. Lincoln, at Chase's suggestion, had the references to colonization in the Proclamation explicitly state that it would be voluntary.¹⁸

Seward was opposed to the Emancipation Proclamation, as he feared that it might lead Britain to recognize the Confederacy or even intervene in the Civil War if the Proclamation had the effect of cutting off Britain's cotton supply. Seward deprecated completely any humanitarian interest by the Europeans in ending slavery. He also saw the purpose of the war as being to end the secession and restore the Union and not to end slavery. But Seward was shrewd in not attempting to talk Lincoln out of issuing the Proclamation. He suggested that he wait to issue it until after the Union had achieved a major military victory. Otherwise it might be considered by both the Confederacy and the Europeans to be a measure of desperation, a "last shriek on the retreat."¹⁹

Lincoln had planned on issuing the Proclamation the following day, but after the lackluster support in the cabinet and Seward's plea and a conversation with Thurlow Weed that evening, Lincoln decided to set it aside. Over the next five days Sumner repeatedly pressed Lincoln to issue the Proclamation. But Lincoln replied, "We mustn't issue it until after we have a victory."²⁰

The next major battle that would have given Lincoln an opportunity to issue the Proclamation was Second Manassas at the end of August. But Jackson and Lee won another victory.

Urban racial riots broke out in Northern cities in the summer of 1862 aimed at free blacks after Lincoln signed the Second Confiscation Act. "Can Niggers Conquer Americans?" was one New York newspaper headline after Lincoln signed the Act. On August 14, 1862, Lincoln invited a small group of black leaders to the White House—the first time this had ever occurred in American history—to discuss the future of their race in America. It was Lincoln's intention to persuade them that they in fact had no future in America and should support colonization. Lincoln explained that white oppression of and hatred toward blacks was a fact that was not likely to change in the short term. It was a "fact, about which we all think and feel alike, I and you." It was "a fact with which we have to deal" for "I cannot alter it," confessed Lincoln. Lincoln suggested both Liberia in West Africa and Central America as possible destinations for

colonization. Lincoln asked them to recruit volunteers for his colonization project. But Lincoln failed to persuade them as they considered themselves Americans and not Africans or foreigners in any sense. Lincoln's proposals were denounced by black leaders throughout the North and by Radicals including Chase. Chase, who formerly supported colonization, complained the day after the meeting, "How much better would be a manly protest against prejudice against color."²¹

The most thought-out plans for colonization during the Civil War called for colonization in Central American and Haiti. There was a plan to buy up land in northern Panama in the Chiriqui province and elsewhere in Central America in order to mine coal for the Navy. Both Chase and the Secretary of Navy, Gideon Welles opposed the plan on the grounds that the title to Chiriqui had not yet been legally established. Attorney General Edward Bates supported the scheme as he was a fervent supporter of colonization. He supported the Emancipation Proclamation in the cabinet largely on the understanding that the emancipated slaves would be colonized abroad. On October 1, 1862, a week after the issue of the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln held a cabinet meeting to discuss the twin subjects of emancipation and colonization. Bates was in favor of signing colonization treaties with as many countries as possible that might serve as future destinations for black emigration. Both he and Blair supported mandatory forcible colonization. Chase and Stanton were both opposed to colonization. Welles did not support either emancipation or colonization. Lincoln favored colonization, but only if it was voluntary.²²

Although five different sites in Latin America ranging from the West Indies to Dutch Guiana were mentioned as possible colonization sites, only two were seriously considered for colonization schemes. After an American entrepreneur, Thompson, bought up title to thousands of acres at Chiriqui, Lincoln had his own brother-in-law, Ninian Edwards, check out the legal title to the scheme. After Chase and Welles both refused to handle the project Lincoln turned it over to Interior Secretary Caleb Smith, who he knew supported colonization. Smith gave his approval for the project. But the project never got off the ground because Senator Thaddeus Stevens helped to defeat an appropriation to fund the project after it was reported that the area was so disease ridden as to be uninhabitable for Americans. And both Honduras and Nicaragua refused to sign colonization treaties with the United States—not surprising after the William Walker experience less than a decade back.

The only actual colonization attempt to take place was the landing of 453 freed slaves from the District of Columbia on the Ile de Vache near Haiti in May 1863. The small colony was decimated by smallpox and hunger and the Navy sent a ship to evacuate the 368 survivors the following year. On July 12, 1862, Congress appropriated \$500,000 for colonization, which when added to the \$100,000 appropriated in April to colonize freed slaves in Washington gave Lincoln \$600,000 to work with. In May 1864, Congress finally withdrew all

funds previously appropriated for colonization and the new racial policy became containment of freed slaves within the South.²³

Seward gave permission to the French ambassador to Washington, Mercier, to visit Richmond in April 1862 ostensibly to check on the status of French citizens in the city. Mercier carried a message of conciliation from Seward to the Confederate leadership and warned Confederate Secretary of State Judah Benjamin that the South could expect no help from Europe. He also warned that the North was preparing a large army to invade the South. Napoleon III, Mercier's boss, wanted to recognize the Confederate government following the Seven Days' Battles at the end of June. But he wanted to do it jointly with London. London wanted a pair of clear-cut major Southern victories before it would declare. The first came at Second Manassas but the second never arrived. Horace Greeley was advocating European mediation of the conflict but both, the administration and the Radicals opposed him. This demonstrated, once again that Greeley was both independent and unpredictable.²⁴

ANTIETAM AND THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION

A week after his victory at Second Manassas, Lee's Army of Northern Virginia invaded Maryland and the North. It was to be the first of three annual summer invasions of the North by the Confederates. There were three primary strategic motives for the invasion, neither of which boded well for the long-term viability of the Confederacy. First, the Confederates were running short of supplies with which to equip Lee's army. Second, a victory in the North might prompt the European powers to grant diplomatic recognition to the Confederacy and this might even lead to European mediation or arbitration of the conflict. And it might aid Peace Democrats in the Northern elections in the fall. Third, an invasion of Maryland by Lee's victorious army and an additional victory or two there might cause the state to secede or at least cause the population to revolt.

When the unwashed, smelly 55,000-man army of Northern Virginia invaded Maryland and began to politely "purchase" supplies with Confederate script that the Marylanders knew was worthless, they did not endear themselves to the locals. Only about a hundred locals joined the army. This took care of the first and third aims of the invasion; the second would have to await the outcome of battle.²⁵

McClellan moved his army along Antietam Creek about a mile east of the rebel army. The battle took place between Antietam Creek and the town of Sharpsburg to the west, by which name the Confederates called the battle. Because historians in recent years, as partisan passions have died out, have taken to calling the battle after the name that the victorious side called it by, the battle has come to be known as Antietam. Antietam was the bloodiest single-day battle or single day of fighting in American history to date. The battle lasted from dawn until nightfall on September 17, 1862, and developed in stages from north to south. The names of the partial battles—the Cornfield, West Woods,

East Woods, Bloody Lane, and Burnside Bridge—have gone down into the popular American consciousness (or at least the consciousness of the historically interested and literate). Some 7,000 lay dead or dying on the battlefield and another 17,000 were wounded.²⁶

Even though he had won a victory, McClellan declined to pursue Lee's army and let it escape to northern Virginia undisturbed. McClellan thought that he had done his job in driving the invader from Union soil. He did not seem to accept that Lincoln also considered Virginia to be Union territory. Lincoln held his cards close to his chest as he feinted one way and then another to throw his opponents off guard as to how he would react. In late July he wrote to industrialist August Belmont, "Broken eggs cannot be mended . . . This government cannot much longer play a game in which it stakes all and its enemies stake nothing. Those enemies must understand that they cannot experiment for ten years trying to destroy the government, and if they fail come back into the Union unhurt." On September 13, less than ten days before he announced his intention to emancipate the slaves, Lincoln told a group of abolitionists that he had no power to do so.²⁷

Five days after the battle Lincoln called his cabinet into session to announce that he would now issue the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. Lincoln, who had turned religious after the death of his young son Willie in March 1862, announced that he had made a promise to God that if the rebels were driven from Maryland he would issue his Proclamation. Lincoln announced that the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation would be a warning that unless the rebellion was ended by January 1, 1863, their slaves would be "then, thenceforward, and forever free." The cabinet approved the suggestion with the exception of Blair. After the cabinet meeting, Lincoln and Seward signed the hand-written copy and took it to the government printing office for mass printing. Some 15,000 copies went to the Army for distribution to commanders and several hundred went to the press for reprinting in the newspapers.²⁸

The wording of the Proclamation actually freed no slaves as it specifically exempted slaves within the slave states still loyal to the Union and in territories controlled by Union forces within the Confederacy (where loyalists were allowed to keep their slaves). Cynics today make much of this as did some Radicals and abolitionists in the United States and liberals and conservatives in England. But Lincoln had a number of good reasons for acting as he did. First, he believed that the war powers under the Constitution enabled him to act only in areas in rebellion just as before the war he believed that he had no constitutional authority to outlaw slavery in the states. Second, he still required the support of the border states and to liberate their slaves risked their neutrality or even secession. Lincoln calculated that he could safely free rebel slaves without provoking a reaction from the border states. After all, Kentucky had remained loyal throughout Braxton Bragg's invasion of the state in 1862 and Maryland had failed to rise during Lee's recent rebellion. Third, outlawing slavery in the North would help make the Peace Democrats' case that Lincoln was an arbitrary autocrat who behaved as he wished.²⁹

Seward never thought much of the Proclamation. When later challenged about the effectiveness of the Proclamation, Seward would respond with a story about a patriot who constructed a liberty pole after the Revolutionary War was over. "What is liberty without a pole," he would reply to those who questioned why he built the pole. "What is war without a proclamation," thought Seward. Seward always felt that the Proclamation was an empty gesture and that real emancipation came about because of American military might. Orville Browning, Lincoln's old friend from Illinois and a senator in 1862, described the Proclamation as "unfortunate" and refused to discuss it with Lincoln.³⁰

Garrison and his closest disciples were quite subdued in their reaction to the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation in September. Although the antislavery movement as a whole was quite enthusiastic, the Garrisonians were still suspicious in the absence of any evidence that Lincoln had experienced a religious or moral conversion to their cause. Even assurances from Sumner failed to change Garrison's mind. They still remained wedded to the idea that emancipation should come from religious motives rather than pragmatic ones.³¹

The Radicals, with the notable exception of Sumner, largely ignored the Proclamation. Sumner could take this as evidence that all of his preaching to Lincoln since April 1861 had finally bore fruit. The *intelligentsia* or at least the literary portion of it was enthusiastic. Lincoln received hundreds of letters of praise from ordinary citizens, most of them abolitionists. And the press was largely enthusiastic, but the Radical press was critical of the Proclamation for not applying to areas under Union control and the Democratic press was negative. Even Thurlow Weed's *Albany Evening Journal* editorialized against the Proclamation for turning the war into an "abolition crusade." Lincoln's secretary John Hay noted that Chase and his friends "all seemed to feel a sort of new and exhilarated life" after the Proclamation as if it "had freed them as well as the slaves. They gleefully and merrily called each other and themselves abolitionists."³²

After the execution of the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, the antislavery movement would take a radically new direction. The abolitionists would occupy themselves with looking after the physical welfare of newly liberated slaves and with recruiting slaves for the Army once the decision had been made to recruit blacks. Radicals in Congress would push for the recruitment of blacks into the Army, equal pay for the soldiers once recruited, and the reconstruction of the South along new racial lines. The battle for recruitment took place in late 1862 and early 1863 and the fight over reconstruction occupied the Radicals during 1864 and 1865. As the war came to a climax, the Radicals would begin to push for the abolition of slavery in the United States with the support of the Lincoln administration. But the Radicals remained convinced that Lincoln was still too timid in his pursuit of both victory and reconstruction and that they knew better. This would come to affect the election campaign in 1864.

THE ELECTIONS AND THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION IMPLEMENTED

Charles Francis Adams, the former Free Soil vice-presidential candidate, sailed for England to take up his appointment as American ambassador on May 1, 1861. By the time he arrived, he discovered that Her Majesty's Government had already granted belligerency rights to the Confederacy, a logical outcome of the declaration of a blockade on Confederate ports by Washington. While there, during his first two years, Adams was chiefly concerned that Britain did not violate its declared neutrality in the Civil War by any action that might favor the South. Initially public opinion favored the North, but was quite fickle and soon shifted to favor the South after the Confederate victory at First Manassas. Adams faced a tough task in attempting to prevent England from becoming a place for outfitting warships for the Confederacy against international law and Britain's own Foreign Enlistment Act of 1819.³³

On September 14, 1862, British Prime Minister Lord Palmerston wrote to his foreign secretary, Lord Russell, inquiring if the Confederates had another major victory and captured either Washington or Baltimore, should not the British government offer its services as mediator between the two sides. Three days later, on the day of the Battle of Antietam, Lord Russell wrote back in agreement with his superior. As a result of the outcome of the battle, Palmerston lost his enthusiasm for mediation but Russell and future Prime Minister William Gladstone, who was then chancellor of the exchequer (finance minister), retained their support for the effort. Gladstone, in an uncleared speech, even called for recognition of the Confederacy as it had demonstrated its staying power. Russell told Adams that both Prime Minister Lord Palmerston and the rest of the cabinet had regretted Gladstone's speech. On October 28, 1862, the British cabinet voted against a proposal by the pair to offer a mediation proposal. Emperor Napoleon III, however, proposed to both Britain and Russia that the three powers jointly propose to the American belligerents a six-month armistice, during which the blockade would be suspended. Because the proposal so blatantly favored the South, Russia immediately rejected the suggestion. The British cabinet also turned the offer down after two days of discussion. The likelihood of European intervention would steadily recede for the remainder of the war. Russell failed to mention to Adams that he was a prime instigator behind Napoleon's proposal for European intervention.³⁴

The Republicans experienced substantial reversals in the state and congressional elections in the fall of 1862. They lost two governor's races and also lost control of the state legislatures in New Jersey, Illinois, and Indiana and 34 congressional seats throughout the North. This cut the Republican majority to only eighteen. Both Montgomery Blair and Caleb Smith appeared to be vindicated in their opposition to the Emancipation Proclamation. Because the governors of Illinois and Indiana had been elected in 1860 to four-year instead of two-year terms, they were not at stake or they probably would have gone to

the Democrats. Both Ohio and Pennsylvania held both its gubernatorial and legislative elections in odd-numbered years, keeping those states for the Republicans for at least another year, but the Republicans lost control of their congressional delegations.³⁵

The battles in October were indecisive and still left the Confederates in a more favorable position than they had been in the spring. This combined with the emergency measures such as the suspension of *habeas corpus* created a general war fatigue in the North outside of abolitionist New England. In those areas outside of New England that held elections, the Democrats gained. But the Republicans still maintained control of seventeen out of nineteen free-state governorships and sixteen legislatures. The Republicans also experienced a net gain of five seats in the Senate. The results were no reason for the Democrats to get very excited.³⁶

In November 1862, Lincoln proposed three constitutional amendments to Congress, all connected with emancipation. They proposed compensated emancipation for slaves in the Union slave states and colonization of blacks overseas.³⁷

General David Hunter carried out the first experiment in recruiting and training black troops on the South Carolina sea islands in May 1862. Hunter resorted to drafting freed men into the regiment when there were few volunteers. This was a major mistake as it led to the belief that the Yankees would treat the blacks the same as the rebels had. In August, Hunter disbanded all but a single company of the regiment. This was also partially in response to Lincoln ruling in July 1862 that freed slaves could be used as laborers but not as soldiers.³⁸

During the fall of 1862 there were some limited experiments in recruiting and training black troops even though the Proclamation itself called only for their use as laborers in Union camps and building fortifications. In the summer of 1862 Congress repealed the militia law that prohibited the recruitment of black troops. In Kansas General Jim Lane, who had been a free-state militia commander during Bleeding Kansas days and then one of Kansas's first two senators, was drilling two regiments of black troops. He permitted them to fight rebel guerrillas in Missouri in the fall of 1862 resulting in the first black casualties of the war; ten killed in October. Hunter's successor, General Rufus Saxton, was authorized to raise up to five regiments of black recruits on the sea islands by Stanton in August. Taking the one surviving company of Hunter's regiment as a nucleus, Saxton had his first regiment ready on November 7. The First South Carolina Volunteers was officially the first authorized black regiment formed in the Civil War. One woman from South Carolina reacted to the news of black troops with outrage. "Just think how infamous it is that our gentlemen should have to go out and fight niggers . . . every nigger they shoot is a thousand dollars out of their own pockets! Was there ever anything so outrageous?"

By mid-November 1862 General Benjamin Butler had formed three regiments of black troops in Louisiana. Chase's nephew, Samuel Denison, reported that the blacks took to soldiering faster than whites did. This was probably

because they were already accustomed to taking orders from whites. Chase overcame Butler's initial resistance to the recruitment of black troops by telling him in the summer of 1862 that the Emancipation Proclamation was on the way. Once Butler was replaced by Nathaniel Banks as military governor in New Orleans in December 1862, the use of black troops slowed.³⁹

On the advice of religious abolitionists carrying out charitable work among the freemen on the sea islands, known as the Gideonites, General Saxton, decided to invite Thomas Wentworth Higginson, whom he knew of by reputation, to become the colonel of the First South Carolina Volunteers. The invitation was issued on November 5, 1862. Higginson was a former missionary in Africa and had been a member of the Secret Six. He was the first of several members of the Secret Six to be involved in the recruitment of black troops.⁴⁰

After the final Emancipation Proclamation was issued on January 1, 1863 giving legal force to the promise contained in the initial Proclamation, the Garrisonians finally believed Lincoln. Garrison issued a three-tiered boldface headline in *The Liberator* to announce the news:

THE PROCLAMATION.
THREE MILLION OF SLAVES SET FREE!
GLORY HALLELUJAH!

Wendell Phillips very briefly became a supporter of Lincoln. This led one Boston editor to cynically observe: "The Proclamation may lose us Kentucky, but then it has given us Mr. Phillips. He will doubtless take the field with a formidable army of twenty thousand adjectives."⁴¹

CONSCRIPTION, BLACK SOLDIERS, AND THE DRAFT RIOTS

As 1863 unfolded, many of the two-year enlistments of the second wave of volunteers from 1861 were coming to an end. Many of these soldiers had had enough of marching, fighting, death, and camp life. They intended to go home when their enlistments expired and their commanders knew this. There were essentially two means of replacing these volunteers and supplying the new manpower for the Army. First was conscription for the first time in American history. In July 1862, the Congress had enacted an indirect draft through the Militia Act, which required states to form a militia composed by either volunteers or conscripts of all able-bodied men between the ages of 18 and 45 and have them ready for use. The act also authorized the president to federalize the state militia for up to nine months. This stick served to produce sufficient numbers of three-year volunteers and nine-month volunteers (those volunteering for federal service) that the president was not required to mobilize any state militias in 1862. In fact this measure ended up exceeding the quotas required by some 45 percent.

Several states were required to draft militia in order to fill their quotas and this produced considerable resistance in areas populated by Catholic immigrants or Southerners. These included the coalfields of eastern Pennsylvania, Butternut (Southern) districts in southern Indiana and Ohio, and German Catholic townships in Wisconsin. The Army had to send troops into all four states to keep order and Lincoln suspended *habeas corpus* in areas that had experienced antidraft riots or violence. Lincoln made all those opposing the draft subject to martial law. The Army was ruthless in suppressing resistance to the draft. Most of those arrested were Democrats—not because the administration was using this as a means of silencing its political opponents but because those opposing the draft were nearly all Democrats.⁴²

By 1863, the Democrats and Republicans clearly differed over war aims. The Democrats merely wanted to restore the Union. The Republicans wanted to abolish slavery. The Democrats were no longer willing to fight in a war of whose aims they disapproved. Irish Catholics who had just arrived in America resented having to fight for a country that they were still discriminated against in and to help benefit their economic competitors. Southerners did not want to have to fight their kin. German Catholics felt that they would be fighting in a war began by Protestants for Protestant aims. Among Germans this was a sectarian division rather an ethnic one as Protestant Germans tended to support the war. The numerous German officers such as Generals Carl Schurz and Franz Sigel, and all the German officers who served under Fremont in Missouri in 1861 and in the Mountain Department in 1862 are evidence of this.⁴³

The other solution was the recruitment of black volunteers both from freed slaves, known as “contrabands,” in Army camps in the South and from free men in the North. Lincoln finally gave his approval for the large-scale recruitment of black troops after the issue of the final Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863. Colonel Thomas Higginson took his First South Carolina Volunteers on a minor raid along a South Carolina river in January 1863 as a baptism of fire. He wrote back an enthusiastic report to Washington that found its way into the press—as intended. At about the same time, Secretary of War Stanton gave permission to Governor John Andrew of Massachusetts to raise a regiment of black troops. Andrew commissioned prominent abolitionist George Luther Stearns, a prominent manufacturer and member of the Secret Six, to head the recruitment of the soldiers to man the regiment. Stearns opened a central recruiting office in Buffalo and hired six prominent black abolitionists including Frederick Douglass to do the actual recruiting. Douglass recruited his own sons as the first volunteers for the regiment, the Massachusetts 54th Infantry Regiment, and by April, he and his fellow recruiters were signing up volunteers at the rate of 30 to 40 per day. Soon they had enough to man a second regiment as well, the Massachusetts 55th.⁴⁴

The new volunteers began drilling in a suburb of Boston and soon the inhabitants of the city were trekking out to watch the curiosity. They came away impressed. The New England Freedmen’s Aid Society sent tobacco, stoves, and

other comfort items to the recruits and recruited a corps of teachers to give reading instruction to those recruits who were illiterate. Andrew invited Robert Gould Shaw, the son of prominent Garrisonian abolitionists who were friends of Andrew as well as the Childs, to serve as the regimental commander. Shaw was a Harvard graduate and a captain in the Second Massachusetts Infantry with the experience of many battles behind him. He accepted the offer. Andrew selected Norwood Hallowell, member of another prominent abolitionist family to serve as Shaw's executive officer. Most of the other white officers also came from an abolitionist background. Many had been guests in Garrison's home before the war.⁴⁵

In May 1863, the 54th Massachusetts passed-in-review through the streets of Boston before shipping out to South Carolina. The band played John Brown's Body and many prominent abolitionists gathered in the home of Wendell Phillips to watch the spectacle.

On the evening of July 18, the 54th Massachusetts led an assault across the beach against the well-defended Fort Wagner outside of Charleston. Colonel Shaw asked the brigade commander for a chance to have him demonstrate the ability of the black soldiers. He was given the assignment of leading the brigade's assault. Shaw, Hallowell, and half the men of the regiment were casualties of the assault. But they held the parapet of the fort for an hour before being driven off. Accounts of the battle were prominent in the Northern press and helped to change attitudes toward black soldiers in the North. When an inquiry was made about the return of Shaw's body, a Confederate officer replied, "We have buried him with his niggers." Shaw's father refused to ask for his body back stating that it was appropriate that a commander be buried with his men.⁴⁶

The Battle of Fort Wagner was not the first major battle involving black troops. On May 27, 1863, two regiments of Louisiana black volunteers were involved in the assault on Port Hudson along the Mississippi. Although the assault failed, the black soldiers proved that they could fight and die as bravely as their fellow white soldiers. On June 7, two regiments of untrained black contrabands equipped with old muskets repulsed an attack by a Confederate brigade in Richard Taylor's army at Milliken's Bend, north of Vicksburg on the Mississippi. Reportedly several of the blacks were executed after surrendering. General Taylor himself wrote that "a very large number of the negroes were killed and wounded, and, unfortunately, some 50, with 2 of their white officers, captured." This seems to reflect the official Confederate policy of treating black soldiers as war criminals rather than as prisoners of war. Grant wrote that the black troops "behaved well." Assistant Secretary of War Charles Dana, traveling with Grant's army in the field, was much more enthusiastic.⁴⁷

With this newfound acceptance of blacks as soldiers, recruiting efforts were stepped up. Lincoln publicly praised the efforts of black troops in a public letter to James Conkling of Illinois on August 26, 1863. "You say you will not fight to free negroes. Some of them seem willing to fight for you."⁴⁸

Under the militia act of 1862, the only legislation relevant to pay of troops, white privates were paid \$13 per month plus a clothing allowance of

\$3.50 per month; black privates were paid \$10 a month and up to \$3 per month could be deducted to pay for their clothing. This amounted to a disparity of up to \$6.50 per month or 65 percent of the black private's monthly pay (or 50 percent of the white private's pay). The words of praise by Lincoln merely added salt to the wound. Stanton, under legal advice from his department's lawyers, had fixed this as the rate of pay in June 1863. On August 1, 1863, Frederick Douglass addressed a public letter of resignation to Stearns in which he complained of the unequal pay for black troops. Stearns, who agreed with Douglass, urged him to seek an interview with Lincoln on the issue. Lincoln met with Douglass on August 10, 1863, and pleaded necessity. He promised that eventually pay rates and treatment of troops would be equal. The 54th and 55th Regiments, with the support of their officers, refused to accept any pay when they learned that they would be paid less than whites. Governor Andrew met with Lincoln, Stanton and other officials and stated that the recruits had been promised equal pay with whites at the time of their enlistment. All the officials sympathized but pleaded that their hands were tied. Andrew had the Massachusetts legislature pass a special appropriation to make up the difference in pay rates, but the soldiers were still not satisfied. They were unwilling "that the Federal Government should throw mud upon them, even though Massachusetts stands ready to wipe it off."

Stanton, in his annual report to Congress in December 1863, asked it to pass legislation to equalize the pay rates. But many Democrats and even conservative Republicans felt that giving blacks equal pay would insult the manhood of white troops. Antislavery societies all over the North adopted resolutions calling for equal pay and even for the creation of black officers. Colonel Higginson got involved in the dispute and said that the issue was not just one of equalizing pay but also of making it retroactive to the time of enlistment as this was what had been promised to his regiment. Senator William P. Fessenden of Maine (whose father was a Liberty man) was the leading Republican opponent of the measure on the grounds that it would cost the government \$1.5 million that it could ill-afford. Senators Sumner and Wilson of Massachusetts became the leading advocates of equal and retroactive pay in the Senate. But Wilson introduced a compromise position to make equal pay retroactive only to January 1, 1864. Finally on June 15, 1864, Congress voted to make equal pay retroactive for all black soldiers to January 1864 and retroactive to the time of their enlistment for all blacks who were free men at the time of the surrender of Fort Sumter. Franklin Sanborn, another of the Secret Six Brown backers, denounced this settlement as giving retroactive legitimacy to slavery.⁴⁹

Many of the officers commanding black troops as well as those recruiting were longtime abolitionists. General William Birney, son of Liberty Party presidential candidate James G. Birney, recruited black troops in Maryland for a unit that he led. Birney lobbied Chase and others for an appointment as the head of the Freedmen's Bureau. Birney had on several occasions complained to his father in the early 1840s about Chase's disloyalty to the party of which his father was the presidential nominee.⁵⁰

Samuel Gridley Howe, who had earned a worldwide reputation for his reform work with the blind, was prominent in abolitionist politics in the 1850s as a Free Soiler and member of the Bird Club. He was a member of the Secret Six in 1858–59. In 1862, the Emancipation League, a new wartime abolitionist society, was pushing for the creation of an emancipation bureau. It sent Howe to Washington to lobby Chase and other officials who were open to the idea of a bureau. The League sent a petition to Washington signed by prominent abolitionists and Republicans from Massachusetts demanding creation of such a bureau. They were also supported in this demand by the Garrisonians.

Howe suggested that the League provide the government with a set of reliable research about the present employment conditions of black freemen. Survey forms were sent off to everyone in the country known to be involved in working with blacks. The forms questioned them about black wages, comparable wages for whites, the character of black workers, and their suitability for education. Answers indicated that blacks were hardworking when provided with suitable incentives, earned between \$7 and \$10 per month on government jobs, were usually honest, and were as capable of learning as comparable classes of whites.

Based on these answers the War Department announced in March 1863 the creation of the American Freedman's Inquiry Commission consisting of three abolitionists including Howe. The Commission toured camps in Virginia in the spring and on June 30, 1863, issued a preliminary report, written mainly by Robert Dale Owen, that was full of abolitionist ideas that Owen had absorbed during the war. Howe was the only Commission member who was a prewar abolitionist. Owen did most of the writing of the Commission's final report, which was completed in May 1864, but it reflected the thinking of all three members. The report argued for equal rights for blacks and was later labeled by one historian as a "blueprint for Radical Reconstruction."⁵¹

In the fall of 1863 the freedmen's aid societies of Boston, New York, and Philadelphia held a rally at Cooper Union, New York to pressure the government to create a Freedmen's Bureau as called for in the preliminary report. The organizers sent a delegation to the White House to lobby Lincoln who appeared sympathetic, but cannily suggested that they lobby Congress for the creation of the Bureau. Lincoln did pass on the information given him by the group to Congress with a message that he supported it. A bill by Congressman Thomas Eliot to create such a Bureau was reintroduced in the 1863–64 session and passed.

The bill called for the establishment of the Bureau within the War Department. But Sumner wanted it established within the Treasury. He amended the Senate version of the bill to reflect this. This fight over control of the Bureau prevented Congress from enacting a bill in 1864. The Freedmen's Bureau was finally established within the War Department in March 1865 under the control of General Oliver Otis Howard with most of the commissioners and assistant commissioners being generals and most of the lower officials being lower-ranking officers.⁵²

Eventually by the end of the war one out of every eight Union soldiers would be black: 180,000 in the Army and another 10,000 sailors in the Navy. But mass black enlistment did not come in time to prevent conscription and the draft riots that accompanied it. A Conscription Act was passed in March 1863 setting the stage for the first draft. The North held four drafts during the course of the war: the first in July 1863 and three in 1864. Although no professions were exempted, as in the Confederate conscription acts, able-bodied men were exempted if they were the sole means of support for a widow, an orphan sibling, a childless wife, or an indigent parent. Those not exempted could also hire a substitute to serve in the war or pay a \$300 fee—a year's wages for unskilled laborers. In the end only about seven percent of those drafted ended up reporting for service and serving. The main purpose of the draft was not to provide a conscript army but to induce men to volunteer for better wages in order to avoid the draft. In this it was successful. When the exemption fee was abolished in mid-1864 it had the effect of making the hiring of a substitute too expensive for working men.⁵³

Rioting broke out in New York City on July 11 when draft commissioners began appearing on the streets to enforce the draft. The drawings on Saturday July 11, went off undisturbed. But the following day working men gathered in bars and threatened to lynch anyone attempting to enforce the laws. The riots quickly assumed both a class and racial character with poor white immigrant Irish attacking even poorer blacks and well-dressed whites whom they termed "\$300 men." On July 15 and 16 several regiments from Pennsylvania and New York, rushed to the city from Gettysburg, fired on rioting mobs as they had fired on the rebels two weeks before. By July 17 an uneasy calm prevailed over the city. Four days of rioting produced at least 105 dead—the worst riot in American history. When drafting resumed in August some 20,000 troops were in the city to enforce the peace.⁵⁴

In June 1863 Lee again invaded the North, largely a repeat of his invasion the year before. Except this time he continued on into southern Pennsylvania. The three-day battle was the bloodiest in American history, with some 51,000 casualties, more than half of them suffered by the Confederates. Shortly afterward the Confederacy withdrew its envoy from London having given up hope off British recognition or support. The day after the end of the Battle of Gettysburg, Vicksburg fell to Grant cutting the Confederacy in two at the Mississippi River. Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas were all cut off from the rest of the South and could no longer supply the South. This was the beginning of the end for the Confederacy. But before the end could come, Lincoln would have to find a relentless general to command in the East.

A final attempt in the British parliament by pro-Southern members to provoke a serious initiative on British mediation failed in June 1863. John A. Roebuck presented his case very clumsily and the motion to mediate was finally withdrawn. This was the last significant parliamentary move toward either British mediation or recognition of the Confederacy.⁵⁵ Gettysburg and Vicksburg were just additional nails in the coffin.

Reelection and a Second Abolitionist Schism

INTRODUCTION

In order to reestablish that the Republican victory was not a freak accident in the unique circumstances that prevailed in 1860, Abraham Lincoln or an alternative Republican candidate needed to win election in November 1864. Otherwise, the Republican Party could easily end up going the way of the Liberty Party and the Free Democrats before them. Lincoln also viewed his own reelection as vital to the war effort, his personal political task of winning the war, saving the Union, and abolishing slavery. During the course of 1864 Lincoln faced three distinct but overlapping election challenges. First, was Lincoln's bid to be nominated by the Republican Party as its presidential candidate in the face of an underground campaign by Treasury Secretary Salmon Chase to defeat him. Second, Lincoln faced a third-party challenge from former Republican nominee John C. Fremont that was backed by many abolitionists and by many German-Americans. Finally, Lincoln faced the general election challenge from General George B. McClellan, who was the Democratic nominee. All of these challenges were played out against the backdrop of the major battles that took place during the spring, summer, and fall of 1864 and that had the potential to have more impact on the campaign than anything that the candidates or the parties did themselves.

CHASE'S CAMPAIGN 1863-64

Traditionally, even in the nineteenth century, an incumbent president was given the benefit of the doubt and was considered the presumed nominee

of his party. But during the Second Party System this broke down somewhat for two reasons. First, the Democrats, having to appease the Slave Power, made some Democratic presidents “damaged goods” in the eyes of the electorate and so a fresh doughface was chosen. Second, among the Whigs, no precedent was established because the two elected Whig presidents both died in office and their replacements were not necessarily granted that same presumption. And as Lincoln was the first Republican president, there was no established precedent within his party. Lincoln had wisely wrapped his rivals within the embrace of the cabinet where he could watch over them. Of his four main rivals from Chicago, three were not a problem. Only Salmon Portland Chase had the support of Radicals necessary to mount a serious challenge. Edwin Stanton, although a Radical, was unacceptable to Radicals as a candidate because of his previous Democratic political career.

Chase, as mentioned earlier, poured all the grief from the premature loss of three successive wives from childbirth and disease into the abolitionist cause in the 1840s. After having suffered through years of frustration dealing with the clerics of the Liberty Party and the failure of the Free Democrats, Chase devoted the next decade to advancing his own personal career. After quarrelling with Joshua Giddings over his senate nomination in 1849, Chase won two terms as governor of Ohio. He was frustrated at both the 1856 and 1860 Republican conventions by a lack of organization. He blamed his loss at Chicago on Ben Wade’s treachery rather than on his own lack of organization. The Radicals in Congress did not have a candidate of their own to run against Lincoln in 1864. Their best bets were either Chase or to find a victorious Union general who would run.

Chase returned to his home state of Ohio in the fall of 1863 to campaign against Clement Vallandigham, the Peace Democrat who had been deported to the Confederacy the previous year and was running for governor from exile in Canada. There had been rumors of a possible Copperhead rising in the Middle West in 1863. But the defeats at Gettysburg and Vicksburg put an end to that. Vallandigham lost to his opponent by more than 100,000 votes, thanks to the soldiers’ vote—Ohio being one of the few states that allowed absentee soldiers to vote. They voted about 95 percent Republican and considered Copperheads to be traitors. While campaigning in Ohio, Chase perceived that he was still personally popular there. After the Ohio election, Chase intensified his efforts to win the Republican nomination in 1864. His strategy was to always keep himself in the public eye while his Ohio supporters consolidated support for a “native son” candidacy from Ohio. Chase also used the patronage of the Treasury to win political influence. His fellow cabinet members were his most severe critics. “Chase’s head is turned by his eagerness in pursuit of the Presidency,” observed Bates. Chase had long been “filling all the offices in his own vast patronage with extreme partisans.”¹

Chase also used his daughter Kate, who was totally devoted to him, in pursuit of the presidency. Kate Chase married Senator William Sprague of Rhode Island in 1863 for his money in order to help sustain her father's political ambitions. Sprague lacked good luck, business skills, and an education, and he was a heavy drinker if not an alcoholic.²

Chase continued to complain about Lincoln in letters to numerous friends with whom he engaged in an active correspondence, many of these were former political abolitionists such as Joshua Leavitt. It never occurred to Chase that Lincoln was his superior in either character or intellect. While Chase had some good things to say about Lincoln personally, he had nothing positive to say about the Lincoln administration. During 1863 the support for a Chase candidacy was expressed by those with little influence or position. Flattering letters came from job-seekers and from old abolitionist acquaintances from Liberty and Free Soil days such as the two Joshuas—Leavitt and Giddings. The latter had little influence in the Republican Party. But Chase refused to organize his followers and start an actual campaign.³

In December 1863 a committee of Radical members of Congress formed to support a Chase bid for the nomination. Chase's bid for the nomination was to last a short three months. In early January it became the Republican National Executive Committee (RNEC) and included Congressman James Garfield, who had shared Chase's Washington home with him while awaiting a new assignment; Congressman James Ashley of Ohio; Senator John Sherman of Ohio and Senator Samuel Pomeroy of Kansas. Pomeroy felt that he had not received his fair share of patronage from Lincoln. Sherman was angered by Lincoln's treatment of his brother, General William T. Sherman. The RNEC tried to win the support of Senator Henry Wilson of Massachusetts for Chase's bid. Wilson weighed the matter carefully and decided to back Lincoln as he did not want to endanger his own reelection by the legislature the next year. As much as he disliked Lincoln's racial attitudes, he thought that the country was unlikely to elect anyone better: "bad as that would be, the best must be made of it," he told Rep. Albert Riddle of Ohio. Chase also raised his own name recognition by putting his own picture on the \$1 banknote. Chase was the candidate more of the Radical press than of the Radical caucus in the Congress. He was backed by a number of leading editors including Greeley. None of the influential Radical leaders was willing to commit himself to backing Chase's presidential ambitions. Chase was considered a pompous fool by Thaddeus Stevens and was detested by Wade.⁴

The RNEC produced two documents in February for publication. The first, "The Next Presidential Election," was an attack on Lincoln that accused him of bungling the war effort. It laid the groundwork for the second pamphlet, "The Pomeroy Circular," which was the argument for Chase as the best alternative candidate. The Pomeroy Circular was published in the Washington *Constitutional Union* on February 20. Gideon Welles predicted that the circular "will be

more dangerous in its recoil than its projectile.” The public reaction to the two pamphlets was immediate, intense, and thoroughly negative. Chase had no role in writing either of the pamphlets, which had the opposite of their intended effect by beginning a rush to renominate Lincoln. Sherman was much criticized for sending out the Pomeroy Circular under his frank, but fortunately for him he was not up for election that year.⁵

The Republican caucus of Ohio met on February 25 and endorsed Lincoln’s renomination. Indiana Republicans endorsed Lincoln by a vote of 120 to 22. Garfield advised Chase to withdraw even before the Ohio result was known, because Chase “had no hope of success, and could only distract the party.” Chase apologized to the president, denied any knowledge of the two articles before their publications and offered to resign. “I do not wish to administer the Treasury Department one day without your entire confidence.” Henry Raymond of the *New York Times* advised Lincoln privately to accept Chase’s resignation.⁶

After the Pomeroy Circular first appeared and after Chase had already offered Lincoln his resignation, Greeley praised Chase in the *Tribune*: “No other man now in the service of the Republic fills a post under the President more important or unenviable than that of the Secretary of the Treasury and no other has been filled with more signal ability or more tireless energy and zeal.” Three weeks later, after Chase had officially withdrawn from the race, Greeley praised him again. “Since Henry Clay, we have known no man better fitted for President . . . than is Salmon P. Chase.” This praise even exceeded that of the Circular and implied agreement with its criticism of Lincoln.⁷

On February 27, Frank Blair, who had resigned his commission in the Army to retake a seat in Congress in 1863, made a direct attack on Chase for corruption in a speech entitled “The Jacobins of Missouri.” The Blairs were enemies of Chase both for reasons of ideology and patronage. Chase gave out Treasury jobs in both Missouri and Maryland to rival Republican factions. Blair was fighting for his political life in Missouri when he attacked Chase. Frank Blair, Jr. was 43 in 1864 and had been a general since 1862 after serving in the House for six years. Blair accused Chase of attempting to appease the Confederacy during the secession crisis of April 1861. Blair then returned to active duty as a major general under Sherman in late April. Lincoln refused to repudiate Blair’s speech or come to Chase’s defense—he was enjoying his revenge on Chase and did not want to upset the conservative wing of the party. And Blair, unlike Chase, was one of his most loyal supporters. Chase ignored the attack but was furious when Lincoln gave Blair his general’s commission back. Lincoln had encouraged Blair to temporarily resign his commission and retake his seat in Congress so that he could vote in the caucus for the speaker. He promised Blair his commission back whenever he wanted it.⁸

Following the publication of the Pomeroy Circular, four state legislatures, including Ohio’s, went on record in support of Lincoln’s reelection. In his letter rejecting Chase’s resignation offer, Lincoln acknowledged Chase’s right to be a candidate for the nomination. Chase withdrew from the race in early March

because he had been unable to build any real popular support for his nomination in states, like Ohio and Rhode Island, the home of his son-in-law, Senator Sprague, that should have been for him. During January and February, several state legislatures—or at least state houses, passed resolutions calling for the renomination of Lincoln. Lincoln certainly did not discourage this trend and probably secretly encouraged it. This demonstrated that neither Chase nor Fremont had any chance to win the Republican nomination. Chase was shown to be inept—too cautious to realize his vast ambitions. Senator Edwin Morgan of New York wrote Thurlow Weed that “Chase will subside as a presidential candidate after the nomination is made—not before.” Just to be certain, the Republican parties in Vermont, New Jersey, and Massachusetts declared for Lincoln in May.⁹

Chase probably could have beat Ben Wade in the election by the Ohio legislature to the Senate in early 1863. This would both have allowed him to dispose of a detested political rival and given him an independent political base in the Senate. But Chase enjoyed being Treasury secretary too much.

Charles Sumner, the Radical senator from Massachusetts who had pushed Lincoln on emancipation in 1861 and 1862, rejected all moves to replace Lincoln with a Radical candidate such as Chase or Fremont. He said that he would “take no part in any of the controversies.” “My relations with the Presdt.[sic] are of constant intimacy and I have reason to believe that he appreciates my reserve.” Sumner preferred to stick with the known with whom he believed himself to have a connection. Lincoln managed Sumner by either ignoring him, outmaneuvering him, or crediting him with what he planned to do anyway when the time was right. This helped to keep Sumner on board in 1864. But for the sake of his long friendship with Chase, he played no role in the campaign.¹⁰

Benjamin Butler was one of the most popular generals in the North because of his public relations skills and organization, rather than because of his military prowess. He had few military victories to his credit and was basically incompetent as a field commander. A movement to nominate Butler developed in the early spring of 1864, but was not very powerful. Greeley used the *New York Tribune*'s editorial column to promote Chase, Butler, and Fremont in turn as candidates. In March he wrote to a reader to explain the reason behind his opposition. “I am not at all confident of making any change, but I do believe I shall make things better by trying. There are those who go as far as they are pushed and Mr. Lincoln is one of these,” explained Greeley. “He will be a better President . . . for the opposition he is now encountering.”¹¹

Greeley was “one of the best haters I have ever known,” said Philadelphia Republican journalist, Alexander McClure, who backed Greeley for the presidency in 1872. Greeley came to view his role in defeating Seward in 1860 as a terrible mistake. Greeley's brief honeymoon with the Lincoln administration had ended in early 1864 and Greeley himself had been shopping for alternative candidates since the spring of 1863. Greeley publicly editorialized against intriguing with generals in late September, a few months after he attempted to do so with Rosecrans. By the spring of 1864, Greeley was in the front rank of

Republicans opposing Lincoln's renomination. First Greeley sounded out General Rosecrans about running against Lincoln, but Rosecrans was not interested. Then Greeley supported Chase. After Chase dropped out Greeley began looking at Fremont. Greeley attended a meeting of the New York Fremont Club in March at the Cooper Institute, but gave very little coverage to the Cleveland convention.¹²

Both Lincoln and Chase offered Butler the second spot on their tickets. Chase's offer was made shortly before his candidacy collapsed. Lincoln's offer was made through Simon Cameron in March 1864 about three weeks after Chase had made his offer. Butler turned both men down. He did not like Chase and urged Lincoln to fire him and he thought that being Lincoln's vice president would be a political dead end. Butler anticipated winning military glory in the spring campaign against Richmond that he could then use in a future campaign for high political office.¹³

During the Civil War, four New York newspapers were the most influential papers in America in terms of influencing public opinion: the *Herald*, *Times*, *Tribune*, and the *World*. The *New York Herald* had a larger circulation than any paper in America in 1864. The *Herald* and the *World* were both Democratic papers who supported first Fremont and then McClellan editorially. The *Times* and the *Tribune* were both Republican papers from 1854 through the end of the Civil War. *Times* editor Henry Raymond liked and defended Lincoln and served as his campaign manager during the general election in 1864. In May 1864 Raymond sent to the publisher his *History of the Administration of President Lincoln*. Raymond wrote the nearly 500-page book, an analysis of Lincoln's messages and proclamations, one hour each morning before breakfast over several weeks. It was intended to promote Lincoln's nomination and reelection.¹⁴

The Republican convention of 1864, dubbed the Union convention because the Republican Party had temporarily renamed itself the National Union Party to include War Democrats, took place in Baltimore on June 7–8, 1864. It was a relatively tame affair as the Radicals had already lost the main battle—the timing of the convention—as they had wanted it to be in early September. The Radicals feared—or hoped—that there might be a major Confederate victory in the summer that would make Lincoln unelectable. Lincoln was very popular with the party rank-and-file and the state parties.

The only real issue was over who would be nominated vice president. The pre-convention speculation centered on the issues of the vice-presidential selection, who would be recognized from Missouri—there were rival delegations of Radicals and Blair supporters—and reconstruction policy. Lincoln left this up to the convention but dropped hints that he wanted a prominent War Democrat such as Governor Andrew Johnson of Tennessee as his running mate. Lincoln sent General Daniel Sickles, a former New York Democrat, to Nashville to investigate charges that Johnson ran a tyrannical regime in Tennessee. After Sickles cleared Johnson, Lincoln decided to make him his running mate. Hannibal Hamlin was quietly dropped and Johnson nominated in his stead. Lincoln had known Johnson

since both were congressmen in the late 1840s. Although ideologically not compatible, both were self-made men without formal educations. Lincoln became a lawyer; Johnson became a tailor. Hamlin was the candidate of the Radicals. The other candidate was Daniel Dickinson of New York. Johnson had nearly twice as many votes as Hamlin or Dickinson who were tied at 108 on the first ballot. Johnson won easily on the second ballot.¹⁵

The only opposition to Lincoln was from the anti-Blair Charcoal (Radical) faction in Missouri that followed its instructions and voted for Grant. Lincoln sent instruction to the Illinois delegation that he wanted the Charcoal delegation admitted. He was more concerned about party unity than about a unanimous nomination. Grant had earlier told Lincoln through an envoy that he had no interest in being president. Grant then wrote to J. Russell Jones, the U.S. marshal for Illinois and a close friend of Grant. "Nothing would induce me to think of being a presidential candidate, particularly so long as there is a possibility of having Mr. Lincoln reelected." Before he made Grant general in chief, Lincoln summoned Jones to the White House to inquire about Grant's intentions and Jones showed him the letter, thereby dissipating his fears.¹⁶

Lincoln was renominated 484 to 22. Lincoln was quite satisfied with the outcome, which allowed him to temporarily relax. There were a few credentials fights over the delegates from reconstructed Southern states. Preston King was head of the Credentials Committee. He balanced out the Charcoal delegation from Missouri with a number of Southern delegations. The seating of these delegations also served to negate the state suicide theory of the Radicals.¹⁷

William Lloyd Garrison and Theodore Tilton attended the Republican convention and from there the former made his first ever visit to Washington. Garrison was treated like a celebrity by the Radicals when he visited the Senate. When he visited the White House he met with Lincoln for more than an hour and Lincoln thanked him for his support.¹⁸

Lincoln, in early June, wanted to replace a patronage appointee of Chase in the Treasury, Joshua Bailey. Chase balked and defended Bailey, who turned out to be an embezzler of government funds. Bailey fled the country to avoid prosecution. Chase again offered his resignation—the third or fourth time that year—thinking that Lincoln would automatically reject it as he had in the past. But Lincoln, having secured his party's nomination the month before, no longer needed Chase's support and probably as an impulsive gesture accepted Chase's resignation on June 30, 1864, giving Chase a big surprise. Chase then went on to lie to his diary by writing that "I am too earnest, too anti slavery, and say, too radical to make him willing to have me connected with the Administration."¹⁹

FREMONT AND THE ABOLITIONISTS

By May 1863 it had become known in Republican circles that John C. Fremont would be a candidate for the presidency against Lincoln in 1864. Fremont's

support came mainly from radical abolitionists and from German-Americans. Fremont wanted personal revenge against Lincoln for what he perceived as his shabby treatment by the commander in chief. The radical abolitionists, mostly Garrisonians associated with Wendell Phillips—who had encouraged Fremont to run—and with the Stephen/Abby Foster wing of the group and the Smith circle in New York, wanted a Radical as president. They wanted someone even farther to the left than Chase. In July the German National Central Committee issued an appeal to organize German-Americans into political clubs. Such clubs were then organized in most major Northern cities with Karl Heinzin taking the lead in Boston. Delegates from several of these clubs came together in Cleveland on October 20, 1863, for a national convention. They adopted a number of radical abolitionist resolutions but did not formally endorse Fremont—or anyone else. But German-Americans in Missouri and Illinois, two of the midwestern states with the largest German populations, endorsed Fremont for president in March 1864. Fremont was urged to run by Governors John Andrew of Massachusetts and Andrew Curtin of Pennsylvania as well as by his lawyer and political advisor, David Dudley Field.²⁰

Members of the Missouri Charcoal faction of the Republican Party that Fremont had organized in 1861 while commander there, held a meeting in Louisville, Kentucky, in February 1864. They wanted a May Fremont convention in St. Louis but they lacked sufficient support. They continued to organize for Fremont after returning home. Fremont lacked two things that were indispensable to any serious candidate running for high office in nineteenth century America: patronage and organization. “Fremont’s movement . . . has in it too much of the foreign element, and it does not seem that men of real weight care to enter into it.” This judgement came from the famous diarist, exiled Polish count, Adam Gurowski.²¹

In late January 1864, the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society (MASS), the Garrisonian state organization, debated the nature of Lincoln. Phillips claimed that Lincoln remained only a “half-converted, honest Western Whig trying to be an abolitionist.” Stephen Foster called him “the very embodiment of the Dred Scott decision.” Garrison defended Lincoln as a genuine convert, but lost the battle and had his political judgment within his organization seriously questioned for the first time since 1840. The quarrel was covered in the press as an ideological dispute. But it was more of a tactical dispute on whether or not to back Lincoln for renomination. It was a debate that abolitionists or the antislavery movement had not seriously had since 1852.²²

After the collapse of the Chase presidential bid, Fremont and his managers began to organize openly. On March 18, a Fremont Club was formally organized in New York City. That same day Garrison endorsed Lincoln’s reelection in *The Liberator*, practically declaring himself to be a Republican. A week later, *Principia*, the journal of Gerrit Smith’s Radical Abolitionist Party in New York, put the Fremont banner at the head of its editorial columns. All over the North, Fremont clubs were organized by German-Americans, the Radical Abolitionists,

and the Phillips wing of the Garrisonians. Abolitionists were amused and flattered by Republicans suddenly quoting and praising Garrison in support of Lincoln after having distanced themselves from the abolitionists for a decade.²³

On May 6, a combined group of German-Americans in St. Louis and abolitionists from the Fremont Club in New York City issued a call for a nominating convention to be held in Cleveland on May 31, 1864. The issuers included songwriter and radical Garrisonian Stephen S. Foster, Karl Heinzin, and journalist James Redpath, the latter having been one of John Brown's publicists in Kansas. The call for the convention was signed by several prominent old abolitionists including Phillips, Goodell, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Frederick Douglass. Thus the radical Garrisonians and the radical Liberty men reunited after 24 years. Liberty man Henry Stanton had moved to supporting the Radicals in their call for emancipation in 1861; his wife Elizabeth had been an active women's rights pioneer since 1848 along with Lucretia Mott and Susan B. Anthony.²⁴

A major clash between the two wings of Garrisonians occurred at the annual meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS) in New York City on May 10–11. Phillips accused Lincoln of touching slavery as lightly as possible and claimed he would do the same for reconstruction. The Phillips anti-Lincoln resolution was carried by the razor-thin margin of three votes. On May 25, the Church Anti-Slavery Society, founded in 1859 by the Rev. Henry Cheever of New York as a successor to Lewis Tappan's American & Foreign Anti-Slavery Society (AFASS) denounced Lincoln's reconstruction policy and came out against his reelection with near unanimity. Four days later, the New England Anti-Slavery Society met for its annual meeting and a repeat of the AASS meeting in New York. The anti-Lincoln speakers were Phillips, Stephen Foster, and Parker Pillsbury. Garrison, Samuel May Jr., and Henry Wright led the pro-Lincoln speakers. Once again the Phillips wing won with a resolution by Pillsbury passing by a narrow margin. The debates were even more bitter than the published accounts admitted.²⁵

When the Fremont convention met in Cleveland on May 31, 1864, only 158 people signed the register but an estimated 400 attended. Although there were delegates from every Northern state, most of those in Cleveland at the convention were either from Missouri, Illinois, Iowa, Ohio, Pennsylvania, or New York—German-Americans, abolitionists, and War Democrats. The War Democrats wanted to make Fremont Grant's running mate and wanted the nomination postponed. John Cochrane, a prewar Democrat who became a volunteer colonel and a leading emancipationist, led the Grant men. Cochrane had met with Lincoln at the White House and promised that he would try to talk sense to the Fremont supporters in Cleveland. Instead, he ended up becoming their vice-presidential candidate. Navy Secretary Gideon Welles wrote of Cochrane: "It will not surprise me, if he should change his position before the close of the political campaign, and support the nominees of the Baltimore Convention. There is not a coincidence of views and policy between him and Fremont." Some of the War

Democrats wanted simply to split the Republicans to ensure their candidate an easier time of it in the fall.²⁶

Several abolitionists served on the platform committee of the convention including the Rev. Parker Pillsbury. Phillips did not attend the convention but sent a long letter, which denounced Lincoln's reconstruction policy in Louisiana that was read aloud to the convention. Phillips was under the illusion that the Republicans would drop Lincoln and nominate another candidate when they convened in a week. If that occurred, and it had no basis in fact, the Radical Democrats would dissolve and support the Republican candidate. The group decided to dub the new party the Radical Democrats, probably in a bid to attract support both from Radical Republicans and War Democrats. The thirteen planks in the platform were a strange combination of Democratic criticism of Lincoln as an arbitrary dictator and Radical Republican criticism on reconstruction. The platform called for a single presidential term, direct election of the president (without the electoral college), congressional control of reconstruction, an end to slavery, a restoration of constitutional rights, and *habeas corpus* except for where martial law had been declared. The delegates questioned only two planks in the platform and only one, regarding the Monroe Doctrine, was changed slightly.²⁷

The press generally ridiculed the Cleveland convention and the Radicals were unimpressed by it—no Republicans of any importance had attended the convention. Raymond called the convention “simply a flank movement against the Administration” with no public support behind it. Garrison got into a press war with Fremont's main editor, General G. P. Cluseret, the founder of the *New Nation* and a former Fremont staff officer. As a result, the Hovey Trust Fund, run by Fremont supporters, cut off its traditional subsidy to *The Liberator*. After an appeal, Garrisonians and other abolitionists came through with small contributions. Gerrit Smith sent a check for \$200 to Garrison. In June 1864 Oliver Johnson attacked the Fremont movement in an editorial in the *Anti-Slavery Standard*, the official organ of the AASS. Johnson called Cochrane an “unscrupulous and slippery politician” who had been solidly proslavery before the war and had voted for Pierce, Buchanan, and Breckinridge for president. Johnson claimed that both the acceptance letters and the platform were aimed at an alliance with the Copperheads.²⁸

Lincoln reacted to the convention by quoting scripture 1 Samuel 22:2 “And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men.”²⁹ The quote referred to David's revolt against King Saul and demonstrated just how familiar Lincoln had become with the Bible during the first three years of his presidency. Senator Wilson tried to persuade Fremont to decline the independent nomination, but that was a doomed effort from the start.³⁰

Throughout the summer of 1864 the Fremont campaign was an important factor in the political situation. Lincoln and his supporters feared that Chase was

using Fremont as a surrogate to hold open doubt about Lincoln's reelection chances and force a second convention that would then either nominate him or another candidate such as Butler. In March 1864 the *Cleveland Leader* reported that it could only find five German papers across the North that supported Lincoln. In Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, and Pennsylvania the Germans formed between 7 and 14 percent of the population. Caspar Butz, a key Fremont supporter and editor of the *Deutsche Amerikanische Monatshefte* newspaper in Illinois, estimated in February that there were 400,000 German votes but he did not know if the Germans would vote for Fremont *en masse*. Lincoln's majority over McClellan in November was only ten percent throughout the North. "This Fremont movement is a weak concern, but just as strong as the Birney movement [Liberty Party] which defeated Clay in 1844."³¹ So there was the danger that the political abolitionists could repeat their feat of 1844—of influencing the election in a negative way for their cause.

Cluseret actively sought an alliance with the Democrats. "There is so little difference between this party and the Democratic party that it would be easy to adopt a common ticket, which would sweep every thing before it," he wrote in the *New Nation*. Many Democratic papers praised the Fremont ticket and overtly relished the prospect of facing a divided Republican Party. As a result of this, many abolitionists began to distance themselves publicly or privately from the Fremont movement. Frank Sanborn, who was very critical of Lincoln, criticized Fremont as being no better than a Copperhead. Sanborn claimed that Phillips was the only prominent man in New England who supported Fremont.³² As a professional, Cluseret must have realized that Fremont had no hope of winning anything in the Republican Party and so could only win by attracting Democrats. He did not care if he alienated a few Garrisonian abolitionists in the process. Fremont, as in 1856, left the management of his campaign in the hands of his professional managers. At a Fremont ratification meeting in New York City on June 27, Cochrane referred to Fremont and McClellan as "twin cherries on one stalk."³³

Theodore Tilton, a veteran Garrisonian editor from New York City engaged in a public debate with Phillips about Lincoln and Fremont in the pages of the religious reform paper *Independent* in June. The debate was reprinted and commented upon in the Northern press. Tilton agreed with almost all of Phillips's criticisms of Lincoln; he simply did not see how electing McClellan or another Democrat by supporting Fremont would improve the situation. Phillips admitted that he was an agitator and not a politician. Tilton considered the debate to be the most unpleasant duty in his editorial career.³⁴ In many ways Phillips remained the true Garrisonian—the activist without any political realism that Garrison himself had been until 1860. Gerrit Smith and Garrison had become partial realists in 1860 and more so in 1864 whereas their former colleagues like William Goodell, Foster, Parker, and Phillips, had remained purists.

THE SUMMER OF 1864: INVASIONS AND WITHDRAWALS

General Ulysses S. Grant, created the new general in chief in March 1864 and promoted to lieutenant general—the first since Winfield Scott, invaded Virginia on May 5 and spent the next month fighting continuously until he had Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia besieged in Petersburg protecting the back door into Richmond. Grant’s troops cheered him when after the battle of the Wilderness, they found themselves marching south instead of north. Grant became a hero to the Radicals. But to ordinary Northerners, mostly Democrats, who just wanted to see the war over with he was considered a butcher. During May, the Federals suffered some 44,000 casualties and the Confederates about 25,000. It made no difference that the Confederates were suffering a higher casualty rate proportionately or that they had a harder time to replace their casualties with fresh troops than did the Yankees, the North had grown war weary.³⁵

A year before Lee had written a memo on strategy to President Jefferson Davis urging support for the peace movement in the North.³⁶ There were, according to Clement Vallandigham’s estimate, 170,000 members of the Copperhead organization, Sons of Liberty, in Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. The members were not necessarily Southern sympathizers but just antiwar and anti-Lincoln. Vallandigham met with Confederate agents in Canada at the beginning of 1864 to plot an insurrection.³⁷

In July 1864 Lee detached General Jubal Early and about 15,000 cavalry and infantry troops and 40 artillery pieces to invade the Shenandoah Valley and thereby draw off pressure from Grant on Petersburg. Many of those taking part were veterans of Jackson’s 1862 valley campaign. Early’s executive officer was John Breckinridge, who had spent much time in the capital. This was the third annual Confederate invasion of the North in three years. Early’s invasion was also intended secondarily to influence the Northern elections. His army crossed the Potomac River and invaded Maryland and then headed for Washington. On July 11, Early’s forces were only five miles from the White House on the northern edge of Washington. The capital was protected by only about 3,000 combat troops with little combat experience. Grant responded to appeals from Washington and sent the 6th Corps from Petersburg to defend Washington.

The following day Lincoln went out to Ft. Stevens, which was under attack, accompanied by his wife. In his stovepipe hat Lincoln went up to the parapet to observe the action. Captain Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., the future Supreme Court justice, saw a civilian and shouted at him, “Get down, you damn fool, before you get shot!” Lincoln got down and stayed down. Corps Commander General Horatio Wright had invited Lincoln to mount the parapet. After a man next to him was shot, Wright asked him to step down, but Lincoln refused to unless Wright made it an order. It took Holmes’s more direct approach to get him to obey. Lincoln was the first president to come under enemy fire while in office.³⁸

During the raid, Early’s troops behaved as Northerners had often done in the South and began looting private property. One of the homes raided was that of

Francis Blair Sr., at Silver Spring, Maryland. Breckinridge came upon his men looting and became livid with rage. He had often been a guest at the house. He wrote a note of apology to his former hosts. Lincoln was disgusted with General Wright for failing to intercept Early's force as it retreated from Washington. Early's army was finally destroyed by General Phillip Sheridan who caught him at Winchester in the Shenendoah Valley in October and rallied his troops to victory.³⁹

Simultaneously with this invasion, Lincoln had to handle a bid by the Confederates for negotiations that was backed by Greeley. In early July, Greeley was in communication with Confederate envoys in Canada and urging Lincoln to negotiate with them. Lincoln decided to force Greeley to put up or shut up—on July 9 he wrote to Greeley authorizing him to engage in negotiations with any Confederate envoys. Lincoln laid out two preconditions for peace: first, the restoration of the Union and, second, an end to slavery. Greeley did not want the responsibility for conducting negotiations, because he knew they would fail because of the terms set by Lincoln. Lincoln wrote to Greeley on July 15 purporting to be disappointed that he had not yet shown up in Washington with the Confederate peace commissioners. The Confederates declined to negotiate. Lincoln had temporarily managed to shut Greeley up.⁴⁰

July and August were the worst months for Lincoln and his administration. In those two months three newspapers were suppressed by military order. As a result, Washington's *Daily Intelligencer* declared that Fremont was once again the champion of "free soil, free speech, and Fremont," as he had been in 1856. Lincoln carried out a pocket veto of the Wade-Davis bill, the Radical plan for reconstruction of the South that required 50 percent of a state's voting population to swear loyalty to the Union before it was reconstructed instead of the 10 percent under Lincoln's plan for Louisiana. The Radicals were very upset by the veto. Wade was one of the main leaders of the Radicals in Congress. Davis hated Lincoln because he gave Maryland's patronage to the rival Blair faction. Ironically, he was also a cousin of Judge David Davis, Lincoln's friend and 1860 manager.⁴¹

A number of prominent leaders in the Republican Party began to panic because of the military situation and began to plot to hold a second Republican nominating convention in early September, after the Democratic convention, in order to pick a new candidate to run against McClellan. Among the leaders behind this movement were Sumner, Governor John Andrew of Massachusetts, Thurlow Weed, and Wade. Greeley wrote to Mayor George Opdyke of New York, who was one of the organizers of the effort, "Lincoln is already beaten. He cannot be elected and we must have another ticket to save us from utter overthrow." Greeley suggested another general as a candidate: Grant, Sherman, or Butler. A preliminary organizational meeting was held at the home of Opdyke on August 18. Present were Greeley, Theodore Tilton, and two other editors, as well as Wade, Davis, and Governor John Andrew. Both Chase and Sumner stayed away although both were kept informed of developments. The group decided to

send out a circular letter to all the Republican governors asking their opinion if Lincoln was electable and calling for a new convention to be held in Cincinnati on September 28.⁴²

After the preliminary meeting was held, several prominent abolitionists including Elizur Wright, the old Liberty man, and George L. Stearns, the latter from the Secret Six, contacted Fremont and asked him to withdraw. Fremont said that he would withdraw only if his new party gave him permission to withdraw or if there was a new convention. Fremont, whose lawyer David Dudley Field hosted the follow-up meeting of the plotters on August 30, must have been informed of what was going on in the Republican Party and determined to influence it or at least take credit for it in some way.⁴³

At the August 30 follow-up meeting at the home of David Dudley Field, a number of important Radical leaders were absent. Chase was not present and decided that the effort was too risky and told his supporters not to back it. Sumner remained in Boston. Wade counseled further deliberations. But the others, including Senator Henry Winter Davis, Greeley, Tilton, Professor Francis Lieber of Columbia College, agreed to go ahead with their plan to nominate a new candidate. They agreed upon a letter to be sent to all the Republican governors asking: 1) Was Lincoln likely to be reelected? 2) Was Lincoln likely to carry your state? 3) Did the interest of the Republican Party and the country demand a new candidate who could inspire more confidence than Lincoln? McClellan had been nominated the evening before so the Republican plotters knew who their opponent would be in the election.⁴⁴

It was not only the plotters who feared the loss of the election. By August the Union Army had lost 90,000 men as the result of its various offensives in 1864. The Republicans feared losing Illinois, Indiana, New York, and Pennsylvania to the Democrats in the fall. In mid-August Thurlow Weed told Lincoln that his election was an impossibility. On August 22, he received a letter from campaign manager Henry Raymond that stated that “[t]he tide is setting strongly against us.” Acting upon this information, Lincoln wrote out a memorandum on August 23, stuffed it in an envelope, and at the next cabinet meeting had all the cabinet members sign the back of the envelope without revealing to them the contents of the envelope. After the fall election he showed them the letter. It stated that as his election seemed very unlikely he would do his best to conclude the war between election day and inauguration day in 1865 and would attempt to win the cooperation of the president-elect in this task. That all the members were willing to sign demonstrates the confidence that they must have had in Lincoln’s integrity.⁴⁵

Not a single governor backed the plan for a new convention or candidate. The most sympathetic was John Andrew, who decided that it was too late to switch candidates at this late date. Andrew may have consulted with Sumner or Wilson, who were both backing Lincoln for reelection. That left the plan without much hope of success.⁴⁶ Then news of a battle made the plan hopeless and even foolish.

Lincoln’s reelection was ensured by the results of three battles—all major Union victories—in August, September and October. On August 5, Admiral

David Farragut forced his combined fleet of wooden ships and ironclads past the fort guarding the entrance to Mobile Bay, Alabama. Over the next three weeks a combined amphibious operation by Union forces knocked out three forts and rendered the city, the last remaining Confederate port on the Gulf of Mexico, unusable as a Confederate port. Now the Confederates only had ports on the Atlantic coast open for receiving foreign supplies.⁴⁷

From May until September Sherman slowly made his way south from southeastern Tennessee to Atlanta fighting a campaign of maneuver against the Confederate Army of Tennessee led by General Joseph E. Johnston. In mid-July Davis replaced Johnston with Hood, on the advice of Bragg. This had the effect of making the Army of Tennessee fight Sherman. Hood staked everything on a single big battle. After being beaten in a battle south of Atlanta on August 30, Hood decided to evacuate Atlanta the following day. The news of the fall of Atlanta took two days to reach the North.⁴⁸

After six weeks of sparring with Early in the Shenandoah Valley, General Phillip Sheridan sent his 37,000-man Army of the Shenandoah against his foe at Winchester on September 19. Early lost a quarter of his army and was forced to retreat south, twenty miles to Fisher's Hill. Three days later, Sheridan hit Early again and handed him a major defeat that drove him southward some sixty miles. After October 19, Early was no longer a threat to Washington or the North.⁴⁹

The net effect of these victories was that they suddenly made the war seem much more winnable and Lincoln a much more competent strategist and commander in chief. This made Lincoln's election not so difficult a prospect to believe in. In mid-September Weed wrote to Seward: "The conspiracy against Mr. Lincoln collapsed on Mon. last [Sep. 12]. It was equally formidable and vicious embracing a larger number of leading men than I supposed possible." There was no more talk of a second convention once the news of Atlanta reached the North.⁵⁰

Bennett of the *Herald* predicted in late August that the Radicals would soon be returning to support Lincoln. "No, we shall soon see them all skedaddling for the Lincoln train and selling out at the best terms they can." In September this prediction began to come true. Greeley's was the first major defection. By the end of the month he was even denouncing the idea of an armistice that he had backed in the summer.⁵¹

Fremont never had any expectation in 1864 that he would be elected—he was merely trying to see what he could get for himself. Once McClellan won the nomination and failed to offer Fremont a job in his administration, Fremont lost all reason to run. About this time, Radical Republican Senator Zachary Chandler decided to unify the Republican Party and see about getting Fremont out of the race. Chandler was in touch with abolitionists close to Fremont, Radicals, and close supporters of Lincoln. He worked out a deal whereby he claimed that he could get Fremont to withdraw from the race if Lincoln removed Postmaster General Montgomery Blair from the cabinet. Blair had indicated to Lincoln after the convention that he was willing to leave anytime if it would help the

president. Senator Henry Wilson wrote to Lincoln in early September urging him to drop Blair.

Fremont's wife Jesse credited a visit from John G. Whittier, the former Liberty man and Quaker poet, with convincing her husband to withdraw from the race. On September 17, Fremont sent a letter to Stearns urging his supporters to back Lincoln for reelection. The letter was published on September 22—making Fremont's withdrawal official—and the next day Lincoln accepted Blair's resignation from the cabinet. Welles attributed Blair's removal as an attempt to rebalance the cabinet now that Chase was gone. Wade and Davis were the Radicals who had insisted on Blair's removal, and they supported Lincoln because of it. The other Radicals simply had nowhere else to go.⁵²

MCCLELLAN AND THE FALL CAMPAIGN AND ELECTION

McClellan had moved to New York City after having been relieved of command in November 1862. Within weeks of that he learned that he would never again receive a high command. This was the opinion in the Army at the time—later in late July 1864 Lincoln authorized Grant to offer McClellan a senior command if he took himself out of the race, but by then it was too late to bribe the general with a position. In late 1863 McClellan began his career as a politician by endorsing the Democratic challenger to the Republican governor of Pennsylvania. The endorsement was considered necessary to prove his credentials as a Democrat.⁵³

During the winter of 1863–64, McClellan wrote a series of articles for the *Round Table*, a weekly opinion journal, on military affairs. In February 1864, the Government Printing Office published McClellan's official account of his period in command. The Peace Democrats lost badly in the 1863 state elections and so the War Democrats began to look seriously at McClellan as a presidential candidate to challenge Lincoln. As soon as McClellan began to enter the political arena, Secretary of War Stanton began actively working against him. The Blair clan began a campaign to see McClellan restored to command, while having Lincoln reelected. On July 21 Francis Blair met with McClellan and offered him a senior command—possibly as commander of the forces guarding Washington. This was an important post in the days after Early's attack on the capital. Blair wanted McClellan's public declaration that he was not a candidate for president in exchange for the appointment. McClellan remained noncommittal.⁵⁴

The closer the Democrats came to power over the summer of 1864, the more divided they became as they sensed victory. All of McClellan's managers came from the conservative wing of the Democracy.

Vallandigham and the Peace Democrats gained control of the committee writing the Democratic platform. Before the convention, Lincoln predicted to reporter Noah Brooks, "They must nominate a Peace Democrat on a war platform, or a War Democrat on a peace platform; and I personally can't say that

I care much which they do." Vallandigham and the Peace Democrats gained control of the Democratic platform committee and proceeded to prove Lincoln correct by passing a plank dubbing the war a failure and one calling for peace without preconditions, that is, "peace at any price." The Democratic bosses then saddled McClellan with a prominent Peace Democrat as a running mate.⁵⁵

In his acceptance letter McClellan repudiated the peace planks in the platform after his managers smoothed over the drafts. The words "war" and "slavery" were missing from his reply. This tied in to the Republican strategy.⁵⁶

Traditionally, Labor Day has been considered to be the opening of the fall election campaign during election years. The 1864 general election campaign opened with the fall of Atlanta—of which word was received on September 4. The Republicans had four basic themes that they played during the fall campaign. First, McClellan meant well but he lacked courage. Second, he was guilty of treason. The Sons of Liberty and their aborted rising in the Midwest was conflated with the Peace Democrats and with McClellan to produce this general charge of treason. Third, he was a poor general and hence a poor leader. Lastly, the country could not afford to change leaders during a war. All of these charges but the second was fair—and even it was fair against the party in general. Within the second basic theme, the Republicans had four "lines of attack." First, that the Chicago convention was treasonous. Second, that the Democrats were unwilling to censure the Confederacy because they sympathized with it. Third, that the Democratic platform was written by Confederate agents. Fourth, that the convention was merely part of the plot for a general rebellion by the secret societies.⁵⁷

Vallandigham had been in contact with Confederate agents in Canada in June and a rising had been planned, but it was delayed until the time of the Democratic convention. And then the local leaders lost their nerve and it never came off. But information had leaked out and a number of Confederate agents who had come north were arrested. The arrests made it easy to portray the Democrats as the party of treason. Forty percent of the Midwest's population was made up of those who were Southerners by birth or ancestry and these were the core of the Democratic Party in the region. But most were not soldiers and they were no more eager to fight for the South than for the North. As the prospects for overthrowing Lincoln peacefully increased, they were less and less eager to attempt it violently. Finally the rising was put off until election day and Confederate agents moved northward to infiltrate several Northern cities. More than a hundred Copperheads were arrested in Chicago. Extra troops were sent to major Northern cities to ensure the peace on election day and nothing came off.⁵⁸

In September 1864, Harrison Dodd, the Indiana commander of the Sons of Liberty, went on trial for treason in Indianapolis. The trial was widely covered by the press. During September, Republican audiences only wanted to hear about treason from Republican stump speakers. During the trial, Dodd escaped from his cell and fled to Canada. This was taken by Republicans to be proof of his guilt. In the same month there were further reports of plots by the Sons of Liberty to

free Confederate prisoners in Prisoner of War camps in Illinois and Ohio. Supposedly, the top 150 members of the Sons of Liberty organization in Illinois were the same as the top 150 men in the Illinois Democratic Party.⁵⁹

There were also smears against the character of McClellan—against his patriotism and bravery. The War Democrats who were campaigning for Lincoln as part of the Union Party repeated these same charges against their own party giving them additional credence. Benjamin Butler compared the Copperheads to Benedict Arnold and Judas. Someone else defined a Copperhead as a rebel posing as a Democrat. The charge of treason stuck to the Democrats for the next 20 years and reminding audiences of it was known as “waving the bloody shirt.” Democrats responded to these *ad hominem* attacks on their candidate with those of their own against Lincoln. They attacked Lincoln for his lack of education and tried to impugn his honesty. They recirculated Radical attacks on him from the Pomeroy Circular, the Wade-Davis Manifesto of August, and William Phillips’s letter to the Cleveland convention. In reality, Lincoln and McClellan were in agreement on all fundamental points except emancipation.⁶⁰

The Democrats attempted to use reconstruction policy as a “wedge” issue to split the Republicans. But the Republicans refused to take the bait and simply ignored the issue. The Democrats charged that the Republicans were subordinating the Union to the destruction of slavery, therefore the Democrats were the true Union party. War weariness ceased to be a useful issue for the Democrats after September with its victories by Sherman and Sheridan. The Democrats then attempted to make civil liberties their main issue, but that did not play well due to the revelations of secret societies. Most people saw it as a necessary wartime measure. They were left without “traction” on any issue.⁶¹

Both Lincoln and McClellan became silent as soon as the campaign began. Both behaved as the senior strategists that they were: setting the general strategy, smoothing over disputes within their respective parties, and leaving it to their subordinates to carry out the strategy. McClellan met with a few editors and he encouraged a veterans group, the McClellan Legion, to get out the vote for him. He also wrote to old friends in the Army imploring them to distribute Democratic campaign literature to the troops. He supplied a list of names of supporters on the staffs of Grant, Sherman, and Sheridan so that the Democratic Party could send campaign literature to them. Lincoln’s only “campaign” speeches were to regiments of volunteer soldiers returning to civilian life and they were nonpolitical in nature. Lincoln, however, did try and court the press and especially tried to win over James Gordon Bennett, the editor of the *New York Herald*. The best he got out of Bennett was a refusal to endorse either candidate.⁶²

Navy Secretary Gideon Welles refused to allow Henry Raymond to collect “voluntary” worker assessments for the reelection campaign from the 6,000-man workforce at the Brooklyn Naval Yard. Raymond was baffled that Welles should object to the well-established practice of extorting campaign contributions. Raymond sent a number of personal envoys to Welles to argue his case, thinking that the problem was simply a personal one between Welles and him. But Welles

refused to relent. So Raymond then went to Lincoln to force Raymond to comply. The whole controversy came about because the Republican Party was very short of money in September 1864. Customhouse employees were expected to donate five percent of their salaries.⁶³

The two sides saw the Vermont and Maine state elections in the first half of September as “the picket firing,” the elections in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Indiana in October were the “grand guard fighting” and the presidential election in November was “the final battle.” The Republicans were still in doubt about Pennsylvania after the election, but considered Indiana and Ohio safe.⁶⁴

Congressman Elihu Washburne was still worried about losing Illinois in mid-October. “It is no use to deceive ourselves about this State . . . Everything is at sixes and sevens; and no head or tail to anything. There is imminent danger of losing the State,” wrote Washburne to Lincoln. Chief Justice Roger Taney died on October 12, the day after the election in October. His death had been anticipated for some time as he was in very poor health. Chase had been angling for an appointment to fill Taney’s seat as chief justice on the Court. Immediately after Taney’s death, Sumner lobbied the president on behalf of the former’s old friend. Lincoln was inclined to support him as he knew Chase’s thinking and this would give him a reliable vote there on racial issues and on financial matters arising out of the war. Other job seekers were Attorney General Bates and Montgomery Blair. But Lincoln wanted to use Chase first and so let him think that his appointment was in doubt. As a result, Chase campaigned vigorously for Lincoln in Ohio from mid-September until the election. Chase also undertook a tour of the Midwest from Kentucky to Missouri. Raymond spent the summer lining up speakers for the fall campaign. Greeley campaigned vigorously for the Republican ticket in the fall, but barely mentioned Lincoln’s name. He mostly attacked McClellan’s military record and vice-presidential candidate George Pendleton’s opposition to the war.⁶⁵

In mid-October 1864, Lincoln did his own internal calculation and conceded eight states to McClellan for a total of 114 electoral votes. This was compared to 16 for himself for a total of 117 electoral votes. An aide added Nevada with three electoral votes to his total giving him a margin of six electoral votes. But the Confederate agent in Canada, Jacob Thompson, did his own arithmetic and wrote Davis predicting, “We now look upon the reelection of Lincoln in November as almost certain.” This last assessment agreed with a mock election held at a Confederate officers’ prison. There Lincoln beat McClellan 276 to 91.⁶⁶

By mid-1864, thirteen states allowed absentee voting for soldiers—the first war in which this occurred—and four others allowed voting by proxy. Five states disenfranchised absentee soldiers. McClellan, because of his previous popularity with the Army of the Potomac, expected to win the soldier’s vote. Soldiers, especially those in the West, were heavily in favor of Lincoln. But the Navy remained in favor of McClellan as most sailors were Irish and Lincoln had cut their grog ration in 1862. After the fall of Atlanta, Lincoln wrote Sherman

and requested—if it was militarily possible—to allow Indiana soldiers to go home and vote. General Butler had 5,000 troops stationed on boats in the waters of New Jersey in order to keep from invalidating the ballots of New York soldiers who had voted by absentee ballot. They were ready to invade New York City if there was any rioting on election day or after the results were announced.⁶⁷

The voters had plenty of sources of information on the two candidates. There were four biographies of Lincoln and two of McClellan available for purchase during the campaign. The National Union Congressional Committee distributed some 6 million printed items—almost three for every vote that Lincoln received in 1864. If one adds to this total the nearly half a million pamphlets produced by the private Loyal Publication Society, there were over three for every voter. Then there were the numerous newspapers that were full of, usually rather biased, coverage of the campaign.⁶⁸

On election day, Lincoln did quite well in urban areas except in New York state, Detroit, and Milwaukee because of their large Catholic immigrant populations. These ethnic minorities had little sympathy with a war for black freedom. Lincoln beat McClellan by 411,428 popular votes (2.2 to 1.8 million) and 212 to 21 in the electoral college. McClellan carried only three states: New Jersey, which Buchanan split with Douglas in 1860, Kentucky, and Delaware. The election left the North with only one Democratic governor (in New Jersey) and the Republicans were in charge in most state legislatures, and thus the Senate in 1865. Lincoln won 350,000 more votes than he had in 1860. Out of the 150,635 soldier votes counted separately, Lincoln won 116,887 to McClellan's 33,748. One of Lincoln's friends said, "The soldiers are quite as dangerous to Rebels in the rear as in front." Lincoln had earlier told a visitor to the White House, "I would rather lose with the soldier's vote than win without it." Only in Connecticut and New York did the soldier's vote affect the election outcome. Lincoln carried New York by only 6,749 votes. Lincoln received his votes mostly from farmers, skilled workers, and professionals. McClellan received the votes mainly of unskilled workers and the foreign-born. Farmers benefited financially from the war as they could grow cash crops normally grown only in the South. Both sides competed vigorously for the German vote with many campaign documents on both sides either written in or translated into German.⁶⁹

Voter turnout in the North was estimated at 82 percent. Except in six states the vote total rose in every state. The only significant declines were in the border states. If Kentucky and Missouri are removed for the mixture, then voting in Northern states rose 6.7 percent over 1860. In Maine, voting rose by 22.6 percent followed by Pennsylvania with 20 percent and Connecticut with 12.6 percent. Lincoln carried five states more than he carried in 1860: Missouri, Maryland, Kansas, Nevada, and West Virginia. Three of these were new states that had come into the Union since 1860. In four states, Lincoln polled fewer votes than in 1860 and in these four plus five he polled a lower

percentage than in 1860. "I am here by the blunders of the Democrats," admitted Lincoln after the election.⁷⁰

One historian later attributed Lincoln's reelection, in part, to his magnanimity.⁷¹ With his reelection and a massive majority in Congress, Lincoln could now worry about finishing the war, consolidating the political gains of victory, and reconstruction.

Abolition

THE THIRTEENTH AMENDMENT

Although Lincoln promised for a “new birth of freedom” in his Gettysburg Address in late November 1863, he left it up to Congress to initiate that birth. Since 1863, proposals had been floating around in Congress for a new amendment to the Constitution that would outlaw slavery. The Women’s Loyal National League led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony initiated a petition drive for federal abolition of slavery that gained hundreds of thousands of signatures and presented it to Congress in January 1864 after having spent most of the previous year gathering signatures. It was a return to the petition politics of the 1830s and 1840s pursued by the American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS) and the American & Foreign Anti-Slavery Society (AFASS) to block annexation of Texas and to initiate abolition in the District of Columbia. Now the ultimate prize was up for grabs.

During the secession crisis, various constitutional amendments were proposed to protect slavery and limit its expansion in an effort to resolve the crisis. Before then, the belief was that the text of the Constitution should not be altered, but legislators should simply reinterpret the text to deal with new needs. This is very similar to today’s doctrine of a “living Constitution.” But the proslavery Thirteenth Amendment proposed by President Buchanan broke the taboo on discussion of the Constitution as a manmade document that could be altered at will, provided that the procedures for amendment specified in it were followed. A number of Republicans from various factions began to propose a new Thirteenth Amendment that would outlaw slavery rather than protect it.

Lincoln was content to keep his distance and not involve his administration in these efforts. He was still personally involved in directing the war—especially before March when Grant took over as general in chief. And he needed congressional support for both the war effort and his reconstruction policy.¹

Some members of Congress believed that Congress had the power to abolish slavery in the states by statute, without the necessity of amending the Constitution. This belief initially delayed the move to amend the Constitution. But the process began in January 1864 when Senator John Henderson, a former slaveholder and long-time Democrat from Missouri, proposed such an amendment. Henderson's motive was to eliminate the racial issue as an issue in politics. He proposed wording for the amendment that would limit its objective to eliminating slavery without necessarily granting any other rights to blacks. On February 8, Charles Sumner introduced a proposal for a Thirteenth Amendment that would recognize equality for all persons in the United States—without, presumably, granting the franchise to women. The next day Sumner presented the massive petition of the Women's Loyal National League to the Senate and had the matter referred to his committee. The following day, February 10, Senator Lyman Trumbull announced to the Senate that the Senate Judiciary Committee had decided upon language for an amendment to outlaw slavery and would shortly be reporting it to the Senate.²

The Republicans faced a major problem, however—the 1862 election had resulted in major Democratic gains that made it almost impossible for the Republicans to get the two-thirds majority necessary to amend the Constitution. There was also the question of two-thirds of whom—the states still in the Union or of the former states. Lincoln still pretended that the states that seceded to form the Confederacy were still legally part of the United States. But the Radicals believed in the “state suicide” theory, which held that when they seceded, the Southern states committed legal suicide and should revert to the status of territories until reconstructed as new states. Because Lincoln largely stayed out of the congressional debate, the Radicals ended up having their way. Two votes were taken on the Thirteenth Amendment on February 15 and June 15, 1864. In the first the vote in the House, it was 78 to 62 and in the second it was 93 to 65. The yes vote improved in the second vote because fewer people abstained. The vote was largely a result of the 1862 elections. The Senate passed the amendment by a vote of 38 to 6 in April, giving it the two-thirds supermajority necessary to pass. No further votes were held in 1862 as it was obvious that the results would be the same.³

The Democrats were the party of white supremacy in nineteenth-century America. Those Northern Democrats who followed either Buchanan or Douglas and did not defect to the Republicans still supported the black laws in the Midwest and the maintenance of social segregation between the races. Until the Democrats were decisively beaten in congressional elections, a constitutional amendment prohibiting slavery would never be able to pass. Just such a victory occurred in November 1864. As related in the last chapter, Lincoln—and his

generals—had long coattails that the Republican House and Senate candidates were able to ride to victory in November.

In the first few weeks after his election victory, Lincoln took two actions in support of the Thirteenth Amendment. First, he appointed Salmon P. Chase as chief justice to the Supreme Court to replace Chief Justice Roger Taney who had died in October. In all, Lincoln appointed five new justices to the Supreme Court—the Court's biggest transformation in history. Second, in his annual State of the Union message to Congress in December, Lincoln called upon Congress to pass the amendment. For the first time, Lincoln was openly siding with the Republicans in Congress who wanted to pass the amendment. Lincoln's intervention promised to bring Republicans the support of War Democrats who had sided with the president. Now members of his cabinet began to get actively involved in lobbying Congress to pass the amendment. Former Postmaster General Montgomery Blair, who had resigned in September as part of the move to unify the party, began working for passage of the amendment in the border state congressional delegations. Blair wanted to force the Radicals out of the Republican Party, and passing the Thirteenth Amendment was part of his strategy. Secretary of State William Seward began working in New York to persuade Democrats to support the amendment. Because Seward did not have to occupy himself with being the Union's jailer as he did in 1861–63, he was much freer to engage in politics. And in 1864 the priority had been getting the president renominated and reelected. The very fact that these two personal enemies from the Lincoln administration, who hated each other personally, were campaigning for the amendment was a sign of its support within the administration.⁴

The wizard from Albany, Weed, was, of course, part of Seward's efforts and as a result there were later allegations of corruption and shady deals in order to ensure passage of the amendment. None of this was ever substantiated. According to Rep. Albert G. Riddle of Tennessee, a Democratic congressman from Pennsylvania was promised a safe seat if he supported the amendment. The congressman, whose name he did not mention, was almost certainly Alexander Coffroth. Coffroth had earlier opposed the amendment and then in January 1865 switched his vote. But Coffroth was a good friend of Lincoln and served as one of his pallbearers at the funeral. He may simply have changed his vote in order to support the president. Rep. James English of Connecticut, a Democrat, voted for the amendment and as a result was endorsed in his race for governor by Horace Greeley, which he however, lost. So Democrats who supported the amendment had many reasons ranging from support on other issues either important to them or their constituents, to loyalty to the president, to seeking support from the Republican press for future election efforts. The Congress voting on the Thirteenth Amendment in January would be the old Congress elected in 1862, rather than the new Congress elected in 1864. This is why the administration had to engage in bargaining. Had they waited, they probably could have gotten the amendment without having to cut deals but it would have taken longer.⁵

When the final vote came in the House on January 31, 1865, it was 119 to 56 with 8 absent, giving the supporters the two-thirds majority needed with two votes to spare. Of these votes, 86 came from Republicans and the remainder from Democrats or Union Party members who had formerly been Democrats. Most of these Union Party members would return to the Democratic Party during Reconstruction as the Radicals during the Johnson administration dominated the Republican Party.⁶

The other requirement for passage of an amendment to the Constitution in addition to a two-thirds vote in both houses of Congress is that the legislatures of three-fourths of the states ratify the amendment by a simple majority vote. Again, the question came up of which states constituted the pool from which the three-fourths majority must be drawn. Logically, if the two-thirds vote came from members of Congress from the existing states, the unreconstructed states from the Confederacy need not be involved. And in politics, logic, reason, and consistency do not always rule. In his Second Inaugural Address on March 3, 1865, Lincoln avoided the subject of the Thirteenth Amendment completely. He spoke in the abstract about “binding up the nation’s wounds” and caring for the widows of the war dead. But Lincoln did address the subject in his final political speech of his presidency. On April 11, 1865, two days after General Lee’s surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia to Grant at Appomattox and three days before his own assassination, Lincoln gave a speech in Washington on reconstruction. He stated that ratification by only three-fourths of the loyal states would be questionable, whereas ratification by three-fourths of all the states “would be unquestioned and unquestionable.” Lincoln was using the amendment to leverage the reconstruction of Louisiana into the Union. He was also giving former rebels an incentive to quickly reconstruct their states and an incentive for Radicals to quickly admit those states back into the Union.⁷

President Johnson adopted Lincoln’s policy on ratification after the assassination. On Secretary of State Seward’s legal advice, Johnson admitted ratification by states that had not yet been recognized as reconstructed by Congress. Ratification was almost a *pro forma* process in New England and the upper North. But in the lower North, abolitionists and veterans of the war pushed for ratification. Illinois was in fact the first state to ratify the amendment as a tribute to the assassinated president. Three states, the border states of Kentucky and Delaware and heavily-Democratic New Jersey, voted not to ratify. But on December 6, 1865, the state of Georgia nudged out Oregon to become the 27th state to ratify. This meant that on December 18, Seward was able to proclaim that the Thirteenth Amendment had been ratified.

SURRENDER AND ASSASSINATION

Lincoln only served about six weeks of his second term. He spent this time working to bring the war to an end and working on reconstruction. Lincoln began

his second term by welcoming Frederick Douglass to an inaugural reception on March 4, 1865. For the first time in American history, blacks were allowed to participate in social functions at the White House. Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address is considered by most Lincoln scholars and historians to be his best speech after the Gettysburg Address. In it he attributed the four years of Civil War to divine punishment for the sins of both the North and South in permitting slavery to exist for nearly a century after independence.

In the months after Lincoln's reelection in November 1864, Union victories continued unabated. Sherman took his 60,000 man army across Georgia to Savannah in his famous March to the Sea. On February 1, 1865, Sherman set out to invade the Carolinas. On February 17 his troops entered Charleston, South Carolina as the Confederates retreated. In March 1865 Virginia passed a bill at the express request of General Robert E. Lee to form units of black soldiers, without, however, requiring that slaves serving in these units first be emancipated. The war ended before the two companies of blacks formed as a result of this bill saw any action. On April 1, George Pickett had two divisions serving under him routed by Sheridan while holding the line at Petersburg. Even though Sherman's army was expected to reach Petersburg from North Carolina by the end of April, Grant wanted to finish off Lee by his own army. Grant, with a numerical advantage of 2.5:1 over Lee, ordered a general assault on Lee's lines on April 2. The lines broke and Lee was forced to abandon Petersburg and Davis was forced to abandon Richmond soon afterward.⁸

Lincoln, who had been visiting Grant at City Point, Virginia at the time of the fall of Petersburg, entered the newly captured city. He then returned to City Point and was taken to Richmond after it fell. Lincoln was able to sit at Davis's desk at the Confederate presidential mansion some forty hours after Davis had fled. Stanton was aghast at Lincoln's wish to visit Richmond. He advised against it, but Lincoln simply told him, "I will take care of myself." Lincoln had conferred with Generals Grant and Sherman and Admiral Porter on the strategy for final victory and the surrender terms on a steamboat in the James River at City Point on March 28. While touring Richmond, Lincoln met with John A. Campbell, who had been one of the Confederate peace commissioners at Hampton Roads earlier in the year and the only major Confederate official still in the capital. Campbell urged Lincoln to conduct a policy of reconstruction with magnanimity and without oaths and punishments. Lincoln attempted to assure him. He was also mobbed by a crowd of black admirers who kneeled before him. Lincoln gently admonished them for kneeling before him.

On his return from Richmond on April 4, Lincoln spent a few more days at City Point and then returned to Washington. Upon his return to City Point he read dispatches from Generals Grant and Sheridan relating news from the battlefields to the west of Richmond. Lincoln urged Grant to press the attack. Seward had been badly injured in a carriage accident and Lincoln wanted to see him. He left for Washington on April 8 as surrender by Lee did not appear imminent.⁹

By the time of the retreat from Richmond on April 2, 1864, Lee's Army of Northern Virginia had been reduced from the 55,000 men it had during most of the siege to only 35,000. A quarter of his army was cutoff by three Union corps at Saylor's Creek on April 6 and 6,000 Confederates were captured along with most of the supplies for Lee's army. Lee lasted three more days before he was forced to surrender his army to Grant at Appomatox Courthouse. General Joseph Johnston's army in North Carolina was the only major Confederate army still in the field. The last battle of the Civil War was fought in extreme Southern Texas in May.¹⁰

On April 11, Lincoln gave a prepared speech from the White House to a group of serenaders wishing to congratulate him on the Union victory. The theme of the president's speech was reconstruction. He mentioned in passing that he wished to see Union veterans and intelligent (literate?) blacks given the vote. A renowned young Shakespearean actor in the audience overheard this and reacted, "That means nigger citizenship," said John Wilkes Booth to a friend. "Now, by God, I'll put him through. That is the last speech he will ever make." Lincoln ended up dying for the sake of black suffrage. It was his last sacrifice for black freedom.

Over the winter of 1864–65, Booth had formed a small group of conspirators for the purpose of kidnapping the president and ransoming him for Confederate independence or some other goal. Bad luck (or good luck for Lincoln and the North) foiled the plans on more than one occasion and Booth began thinking about assassinating Lincoln instead of kidnapping him.

On April 14, 1864, Good Friday, Booth learned that Lincoln and his wife were to attend a performance of *My American Cousin* at Ford's Theater that evening. Booth decided to take the opportunity and kill Lincoln while he watched the play. He urged his fellow conspirators to kill Seward and Vice President Johnson as well. Booth, who knew the play by heart, was able to plan the timing of his murder carefully. Because Lincoln's sole bodyguard was absent from his post drinking, Lincoln was unprotected when Booth entered Lincoln's theater box. Booth fired one shot at point-blank range from his derringer into the back of Lincoln's head and then fled onto the stage. Lincoln was carried to a nearby house across the street from the theater and laid on a bed, which was too short for his long frame. Lincoln was brain dead from the moment the ball entered his skull, but his body lingered through the night.

Stanton took charge during the crisis as the president lay dying and kept the government functioning. Welles remained by the foot of Lincoln's bed and presided over the mourners. Sumner was present through the night. Vice President Johnson stopped by but was urged by Sumner, who knew that Mrs. Lincoln did not like him, to leave so as to avoid a possible scene. When Lincoln died at 7:22 a.m. Stanton paid a last tribute to his former boss. "Now he belongs to the ages," said the man who once called him a baboon.

Seward was attacked in his bed by Lewis Paine and viciously slashed twice with a large knife. He nearly bled to death before a doctor arrived. None of the

other assassins attempted to carry out their assignments. Booth was tracked down to a farmhouse in Northern Virginia and shot to death by Union troops. Paine and the other conspirators were later hanged.¹¹

THE ABOLITIONISTS AND ABOLITION

Abolitionists had decided in December 1863 to back passage of a constitutional amendment banning slavery so as to prevent its reintroduction in the South in the future or its continuation in the border states. By early 1864, at least 2,000 men, women, and children were involved in the work of circulating petitions for signature. The Woman's Loyal National League had a goal of a million signatures on their petition calling for passage of the amendment. But by the time Congress adjourned in July 1864 they had only 400,000 signatures collected. But Senators Sumner and Henry Wilson assured the League that these signatures had been very important in winning passage of the amendment by the Senate in April 1864.¹²

In 1864 the abolitionist movement had undergone its greatest schism since 1840 when the Garrisonians divided over whom to support in the presidential election—Lincoln or Fremont. But even Wendell Phillips, the only major abolitionist supporter of Fremont to urge him to stay in the race in September, hailed Lincoln's victory in November. Phillips called on all abolitionists to unite and work for the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment.¹³

The passage of the Thirteenth Amendment presented the Garrisonians with the occasion for an even deeper schism than that which they had suffered the previous year, although along the same lines. William Lloyd Garrison, who was feeling the result of decades of hard work, was tiring of the struggle and wanted to retire. But he did not want to retire while he considered the struggle to still be active. Garrison wanted to define the abolition struggle in a narrow sense as constituting the procurement for blacks of their *natural right* of freedom rather than of other rights that added up to equality. The Stephen S. Foster/Parker Pillsbury radical wing of the movement wanted to define the movement's goals in terms of the complete equality of blacks with whites. Phillips again sided with the radicals and against his old ally Garrison. In April 1865 Garrison was invited by the White House to participate in the raising of the American flag over Ft. Sumter. After decades of being ostracized and outcast on the margins of politics, Garrison finally won wide acceptance from moderate Republicans for his support for Lincoln in 1864. He wanted to retire on a high note.

After passage of the Thirteenth Amendment by Congress, Garrison argued that the antislavery societies had fulfilled their mission and should disband. In May 1865 at the annual meeting of the AASS, Phillips challenged Garrison for the presidency. Phillips won causing Garrison to simply retire from antislavery politics. John G. Whittier and Gerrit Smith, two of the leading surviving political abolitionists from the 1840s, were elected vice presidents of the AASS.

The May 1865 meeting was simultaneously a schism and a reunion as the political abolitionists were brought back into the fold of the organization that they had left a quarter century before. Garrison lost a vote to dissolve the AASS by a vote of 118 to 48. Garrison declined an offer to serve as a figurehead president. Garrison remained on personal friendly terms with Phillips. So there was none of the acrimony involved in the split as in 1840. In December 1865 Garrison decided to discontinue publishing *The Liberator*, which he had published continuously since January 1831.¹⁴

The abolitionists, Chase, Sumner, Seward, and Stanton would play major roles during the next three years in the process of reconstruction and in the impeachment of President Johnson. Stanton's firing provoked the impeachment by the Radicals; Chase presided over the trial and Sumner played a major role in the impeachment. Seward remained loyal to the new president. The abolitionists remained active in pushing for equal rights for blacks. But all of this is another story.¹⁵

Conclusion

THIRD PARTY RIPENESS 1840–60

In this concluding chapter it is appropriate to review several things: First, the circumstances from 1840 to 1860 that caused the failures of the Liberty Party and the Free Soil Party, but allowed the Republicans to succeed; second, the circumstances that allowed Lincoln to succeed during the Civil War in abolishing slavery; third, Lincoln's personal qualities that allowed him to be a successful president in most trying circumstances.

The Liberty Party failed for a number of reasons:

- The American system, like all first-past-the-post electoral systems, is hostile to third parties.
- The situation in 1840 was not yet ripe for an antislavery third party. It began to ripen in 1844, with talk of annexation of Texas during the presidential campaign, but still was not yet ripe.
- The Liberty Party never developed a unified strategy for expansion. Chase and the Cincinnati clique in Ohio had one strategy and the Liberty Leaguers in New York had a different strategy. The mainstream party rejected both of these strategies.
- The Liberty Party was too wedded to the come-outer churches and never developed a strategy to recruit people from the mainstream, nonabolitionist churches. This base was too small to sustain it as a successful party.
- A significant part of the party, particularly in New York, preached in biblical terms rather than using secular arguments to convince outsiders.

In elaboration of the first point, if a third party succeeds it is usually by replacing one of the existing two parties on a local or regional basis. An example of this is the Farm-Labor Party in Minnesota, which eventually merged with the national Democratic Party to become the state Democratic Party. Another example is the Conservative Party in South Africa, which replaced the Progressive Federal Party as the opposition party in large parts of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State after it split from the ruling National Party in 1982. Before this, the Progressive Federal Party had replaced the United Party as the opposition party in English-speaking areas. South Africa was then effectively a three-party system, but with only two parties working in any particular region.

The Free Soil Party/Free Democrats failed for similar reasons:

- The American system was still hostile to third parties and it was still not ripe for an antislavery third party. The situation ripened more as a result of the Mexican War and the ensuing territorial debate, but this still remained below the level necessary to sustain a third party.
- The situation became unripe as a result of the Compromise of 1850. Everywhere outside of Massachusetts and the Western Reserve of Ohio the country thought that the slavery issue was solved.
- The party lacked a national strategy. Each state party fended for itself because of the necessity of forming coalitions with the opposition party and so the party found it hard to have a national identity.
- The circumstances that created it in 1848 were temporary and not able to sustain it over the long term after the Barnburners had returned to the Democratic fold.
- Individual politicians, most notably Salmon Chase—but others as well, put their personal political ambitions ahead of those of the party.
- After 1850 the party lacked a critical mass in its congressional caucus to sustain it as an independent force. It essentially became a collection of independents rather than a party.

The Republican Party succeeded for a number of important reasons:

- The Whig Party was so weak after its losses in the South in 1852 and its losses in the North to the Know Nothings that it was ripe for replacement. The Republicans were in competition with the Americans to become the second party rather than a third party.
- The Kansas-Nebraska Act made the North ripe for an antislavery party as the Slave Power was finally made real to Northerners. The repeal of the slavery restrictions in the Missouri Compromise made the North feel threatened by the South making it ripe for a sectional party.
- Because the Republicans were a sectional rather than a national party, they were internally more coherent than their rivals. The Americans collapsed over slavery as had the Whigs before them.
- Events during the 1856 election campaign (Kansas, Sumner's caning) reinforced the message of the Republicans.

- After 1857 the Republicans could benefit from the weaknesses of the Buchanan administration. The Dred Scott decision of March 1857 enforced the feeling of a threat from the Slave Power. The Buchanan administration was the most corrupt in American history to that point. The handling of the Lecompton constitution in Kansas reinforced Republican messages.
- The Republicans developed a coherent strategy of victory after 1856. This was to preserve the gains of 1856 and appeal to the states of the lower North. Republican delegates used that strategy in selecting a candidate in 1860.
- The Republicans ran a nearly flawless campaign in both tactical and strategic terms in 1860. The Wide-Awakes recreated the atmosphere of the 1840 Log Cabin campaign of Harrison. The party did not waste effort and resources going after votes in the South and in the border states outside of Missouri.
- The Republicans were not a single issue party. They had a much broader range of issues with which to attract supporters than did the Free Soilers/Free Democrats. This was especially true in 1860.

RIPENESS FOR ABOLITION 1861–65

The Republicans had imagined a strategy of containment of slavery and its extinction over a generation or several generations. Southern secession was not a threat that they took seriously in either 1856 or 1860. When it was realized in late 1860 and early 1861, Republicans from Lincoln on down underestimated its depth and breadth in the South. The party had not developed a response for secession and was forced to deal with it as a new circumstance. Lincoln developed the principled response to secession of no concessions. He was supported and sustained in this by most of the future Radicals and by the Blairs, but not by Seward. Lincoln did not attempt to prematurely implement a strategy of slave emancipation before the North was ready for it. Because he was a moderate in the center of the Republican Party, Lincoln was a good gauge of public opinion.

Lincoln exhibited singular gifts and talents from late 1860 until his death. He was an autodidact with the ability to learn new skills and assimilate new information rapidly. He taught himself the principles of strategy from military textbooks and from analysis of maps. For him this was like learning law or geometry. Lincoln used his political experience in the legislature and in Congress to understand how Congress worked. He then extrapolated from that the workings of the executive branch. He also had the counsel of Seward who had executive experience as the governor of New York. Lincoln was very hardworking and had a memory for important details. In this way he resembled both Presidents Jimmy Carter and Clinton. Lincoln probably would have been good at mediating regional conflicts as Carter did in the Middle East and Clinton did in the Balkans, Northern Ireland, and the Middle East.

He had the self-confidence necessary to take aboard much more experienced and distinguished rivals such as Seward and Chase into his cabinet and offer them important posts. Lincoln planned for rivalry within the cabinet and knew how to

exploit it. After curbing Seward and making him aware that he would not be Lincoln's premier, Lincoln made him his trusted counselor. Lincoln did not let his ego get in the way of his mission. He readily brushed off slights that others would get upset about. He did not keep track or score of insults. Lincoln knew how to manage people by stroking their egos and making them feel important. He convinced people that he agreed with them and would act upon their advice, when he had no such intention. But he did not make promises that he could not keep. Bill Clinton resembled Lincoln in this aspect.

Lincoln used his sense of humor and skill at story-telling to his advantage. He told stories in order to make a point. He told stories in order to relieve tension and lighten the mood. And by telling these stories in his Kentucky-Illinois accent he led his political enemies to underestimate him. Chase and Stanton were both initially convinced that he was unsophisticated. Lincoln knew how to use patronage skillfully to sustain political support. He made sure that all important factions of the party received patronage from him. Patronage was another factor that separated the Republicans from the Liberty men and Free Soilers. The Republicans could attract and hold professional politicians rather than merely antislavery zealots.

The rebellion of the South gave Lincoln and the Republicans the constitutional sanction to abolish slavery as John Q. Adams had stated decades earlier. Lincoln's genius came in waiting until the party and the North was ready to sustain this emancipation. He used emancipation as first an expedient war measure to deprive the South of manpower and then to augment Northern troop levels. Only then did he support abolition on principle after the North had been accustomed to slaves being emancipated. And he let Congress take the lead in initiating legislation on both emancipation of rebel slaves in 1862 and abolition of slavery in 1864.

Probably the only other Republican who could have sustained the coalition and successfully carried out the war to victory and abolition was Seward. And this assumes several things. First, that Seward could have been elected president in 1860. He might either have thrown the election to the House or lost outright to Breckinridge by losing the lower North. Second, that after attempting to appease the South in early 1861, he could have rallied the country to oppose secession. Third, that he would not have reached a "successful" compromise with the South that would have merely postponed the Civil War as the Compromise of 1850 did.

None of the other Republican candidates could probably have been elected in 1860. Chase would have been too radical. Bates lacked support in the North and was mistrusted by German-Americans. Cameron would have negated the advantage that the Buchanan administration's corruption gave the Republicans. Chase would have had the courage to resist secession but not the skill to manage the North through four years of war. Chase would have been tempted to emancipate before the North was ready for it. He also would have lacked Lincoln's skills as a strategist. And neither Seward nor Chase would have tolerated the other in his cabinet, depriving himself of the advice and skills that were so badly needed.

Notes

Chapter 1: A Movement is Born

1. See Dwight L. Dumond, *Antislavery* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1961), pp. 1–172 for a history of abolitionism before the appearance of *The Liberator*.
2. Lawrence B. Goodheart, *Abolitionist, Actuary, Athiest: Elizur Wright and the Reform Impulse* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1990), pp. 62, 65.
3. Dumond, op. cit. pp. 175–77.
4. Ibid., p. 70.
5. Ibid., p. 73.
6. Ibid., p. 68.
7. Ibid., pp. 66, 70; Henry Mayer, *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery* (NY: St. Martin's Press, 1998), p. 74.
8. Dumond, op. cit. pp. 160–64; Louis Filler, *The Crusade Against Slavery 1830–1860* (NY: Harper Torchbooks, 1963), p. 72.
9. Dumond, op. cit. p. 164.
10. Ibid., pp. 197–203; Filler, op. cit. pp. 73–74.
11. Goodheart, op. cit. p. 69.
12. Filler, op. cit. p. 72; Mayer, op.cit. pp. 189, 195–96, 245–46; James B. Stewart, “Abolitionists, Insurgents and Third Parties: Sectionalism and Partisan Politics in Northern Whiggery, 1836–1844,” in Alan M. Kraut, ed. *Crusaders and Compromisers* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1983), p. 28.
13. Richard H. Sewell, *Ballots For Freedom* (NY: WW Norton, 1976), pp. 7–8.
14. Goodheart, op. cit. pp. 5, 23, 34, 40, 57–59.
15. Ibid., pp. 61–62, 72, 82–84; Hugh Davis, *Joshua Leavitt: Evangelical Abolitionist* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), p. 134.
16. Goodheart, op. cit. pp. 83–84, 87, 90, 97, 107.

17. Goodheart, op. cit. pp. 105, 111–13, 119, 121–22; Reinhard O. Johnson, “The Liberty Party in Massachusetts 1840–1848: Antislavery Third Party Politics in the Bay State,” in John R. McKivigan, ed. *Abolitionism and American Politics and Government* (New York: Garland, 1999), p. 126.
18. On the formation of the Whigs see Michael F. Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 19–32.
19. Leonard L. Richards, *The Life and Times of Congressman John Quincy Adams* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 27, 118, 123; James B. Stewart, *Joshua R. Giddings and the Tactics of Radical Politics* (Cleveland: Case Western Reserve University Press, 1970), p. 14.
20. Frederick Blue, *Salmon P. Chase: A Life in Politics* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1987).
21. On the Antimasons see Michael F. Holt, *Political Parties and American Political Development from the Age of Jackson to the Age of Lincoln* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), pp. 97–112.
22. Kraut, op. cit. p. 74.
23. Joel H. Silbey, “There are other Questions beside That of Slavery Merely,” in Kraut, op. cit. pp. 143, 145.
24. Dwight L. Dumond, *Antislavery Origins of the Civil War* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1963), p. 93. On the Jacksonian Party System see Harry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power* (NY: Hill and Wang, 1990), pp. 172–253. On the Whigs specifically see Holt, *Whig Party*.
25. Stewart, op. cit. pp. 25–26.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 30–32.
27. Jonathan H. Earle, *Jacksonian Antislavery & the Politics of Free Soil* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), pp. 18, 40–50.
28. Goodheart, op. cit. p. 78; James M. McPherson, “The Fight against the Gag Rule: Joshua Leavitt and Antislavery Insurgency in the Whig Party 1839–1842,” in McKivigan, op. cit. p. 237.
29. Sewell, op. cit. pp. 12–20; Vernon L. Volpe, *Forlorn Hope of Freedom*, p. 26.
30. Goodheart, op. cit. p. 68.
31. Bertram, Wyatt-Brown, *Lewis Tappan and the Evangelical War Against Slavery* (Cleveland: Case Western Wyatt Reserve University Press, 1969), op. cit. p. 188.
32. Wyatt-Brown, op. cit. pp. 189–90.
33. Frederick Blue, *No Taint of Compromise* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), pp. 20–21.

Chapter 2: The Liberty Party

1. Henry Mayer, *All On Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery* (NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), pp. 256–58; Richard H. Sewell, *Ballots For Freedom* (NY: WW Norton, 1976), pp. 29–33; Louis Filler, *The Crusade Against Slavery* (NY: Harper Torchbooks, 1963), pp. 134–35.
2. Sewell, op. cit. p. 37.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 58–60; Reinhard G. Johnson, *The Liberty Party in New England 1840–1848* (PhD dissertation: University of Syracuse, 1976), p. 19.
4. Octavius Frothingham, *Gerrit Smith: A Biography* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), p. 187.

5. Sewell, op. cit. pp. 43–72.
6. Ibid., pp. 61–72; Dwight L. Dumond, *Antislavery* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1961), p. 297; Johnson, op. cit. p. 26; Frederick J. Blue, *No Taint of Compromise* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), p. 27.
7. Dumond, op. cit. pp. 285–86; Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Lewis Tappan and the Evangelical War Against Slavery* (Cleveland: Case Western Reserve University Press, 1969), pp. 194–98, 248.
8. Wyatt-Brown, op. cit. pp. 252–64; Filler, *The Crusade Against Slavery*, pp. 156, 197; Sewell, op. cit. p. 108; Leonard L. Richards, *The Life and Times of Congressman John Quincy Adams* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 167.
9. Ripeness is primarily used by bargaining and negotiations theorists to indicate a situation in which a negotiated solution is likely to occur.
10. Aileen S. Kraditor, *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism* (Chicago: Elephant paperbacks, 1989), pp. 141–77; Blue, op. cit. p. 22. Sewell, op. cit. pp. 122–23.
11. Richards, op. cit. pp. 8, 27, 31, 54, 99, 106–07, 112.
12. Ibid., pp. 120–23.
13. Ibid., pp. 123–25.
14. Johnson, op. cit. pp. 29–34; Vernon L. Volpe, *Forlorn Hope of Freedom* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1990), pp. xix–xxi.
15. Reinhard O. Johnson, “The Liberty Party in Massachusetts 1840–1848: Anti-slavery Third Party Politics in the Bay State,” in John R. McKivigan, ed., *Abolitionism and American Politics and Government* (New York: Garland, 1999), pp. 106–110; Hugh H. Davis, “The Failure of Political Abolitionism,” in McKivigan, op. cit. p. 3.
16. Johnson, “Politics in the Bay State,” pp. 112–14.
17. Ibid., pp. 116–21, 125, 127.
18. Ibid., pp. 122–23.
19. Lawrence J. Friedman, “The Gerrit Smith Circle: Abolitionism in the Burned-Over District,” in McKivigan, op. cit. pp. 12–14, 20.
20. Ibid., pp. 19, 21, 23–24.
21. See the map in Allen Kraut, *The Liberty Men in New York: Political Abolitionism in New York State 1840–1848* (PhD dissertation, Cornell University, 1975). Kraut found a tight connection between church presence and the Liberty vote.
22. Blue, op. cit. p. 28.
23. Friedman, op. cit. pp. 25, 28, 29; Blue, op. cit. p. 29.
24. Friedman, op. cit. pp. 29–30.
25. Smith’s activities will be covered in greater detail in later chapters in this book.
26. Ibid., pp. 263–70, 336.
27. John McKivigan, “Vote as You Pray and Pray as You Vote: Church-Oriented Abolitionism and Antislavery Politics,” in Alan M. Kraut, ed., *Crusaders and Compromisers* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1983), p. 181.
28. Douglas Mark Strong, *Organized Liberty: Evangelical Perfectionism, Political Abolitionism, and Ecclesiastical Reform in the Burned-Over District* (PhD dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1990), pp. 183, 187, 190, 194.
29. John McKivigan, “Vote as You Pray,” pp. 181–85.
30. Strong, op. cit. pp. 272–76, 286–87.
31. Ibid., pp. 306, 319.
32. Ibid., pp. 331–32.

33. James B. Stewart, *Joshua R. Giddings and the Tactics of Radical Politics* (Cleveland: Case Western Reserve University Press, 1970), pp. 55–56.
34. Stanley Harrold, *Gamaliel Bailey and Antislavery Union* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1986), p. 39.
35. Volpe, op. cit. p. 112; Harrold, op. cit. p. 41.
36. Frederick Blue, *Salmon P. Chase: A Life in Politics* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1987), pp. 45–46.
37. Ibid., pp. 32–41.
38. Ibid., pp. 46–48; Sewell, op. cit. pp. 121–22. Volpe, op. cit. pp. 55, 110, 114.
39. Harrold, op. cit. pp. 41–45, 51, 66.
40. Ibid., p. 51.
41. *Philanthropist* July 19, 1843 quoted in ibid., p. 52.
42. Ibid., pp. 52–53; Volpe, op. cit. p. 116.
43. Volpe, op. cit. pp. x–xvi.
44. Ibid., p. xx.
45. Ibid., pp. 80–92.
46. Ibid., pp. 93–97.
47. Stewart, op. cit. pp. 95–97.
48. Giddings to Follett July 16, 1845 quoted in Volpe, op. cit. p. 98.
49. Volpe, op. cit. pp. 99–102.
50. Ibid., pp. 109, 115.
51. Johnson, *The Liberty Party in New England*, p. 44; Sewell, op. cit. pp. 108, 110; Harrold, op. cit. pp. 64–65.
52. Wyatt-Brown, op. cit. pp. 275–76.
53. On the general election campaign see Michael F. Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 172–73, 186–87; Stewart, op. cit. p. 97 for quote, letter is from October 2, 1844.
54. Johnson, op. cit. p. 51; Wyatt-Brown, op. cit. p. 276; Hugh Davis, *Joshua Leavitt: Evangelical Abolitionist* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), pp. 217, 220.
55. On the forgery see Volpe, op. cit. pp. 93–95; Johnson, op. cit. pp. 53–54.
56. Holt, op. cit. p. 197, Table 15.
57. Stewart, op. cit. pp. 92, 103.
58. Johnson, op. cit. pp. 56–57; Harrold, op. cit. p. 69.
59. Sewell, op. cit. pp. 127–30; Johnson, op. cit. pp. 308–12.
60. Johnson, op. cit. pp. 350–51, 357.
61. Harrold, op. cit. p. 83.
62. Ibid., pp. 82–83.
63. Ibid., p. 89, quote is from Russel Nye.
64. Ibid., pp. 90–97; Sewell, op. cit. p. 234.
65. Blue, *Chase*, pp. 50–51; Harrold, op. cit. p. 74; Davis, op. cit. pp. 225–27; Sewell, op. cit. p. 132; Volpe, op. cit. p. 128.
66. For a discussion of Spooner and Smith see Lewis Perry, *Radical Abolitionism* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), pp. 195, 199, 202n.; on Garrison see Mayer, op. cit. pp. 326–27; Sewell, op. cit. p. 95.
67. Lawrence B. Goodheart, *Atheist, Abolitionist, Actuary: Elizur Wright and the Reform Impulse* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1990), p. 128.

68. Joseph G. Rayback, *Free Soil: The Election of 1848* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1970), pp. 81–87; Stewart, op. cit. p. 110 on Sumner.

69. David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis 1848–1861* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1976), pp. 18–23; Jonathan H. Earle, *Jacksonian Antislavery & the Politics of Free Soil* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), pp. 2–3, 129–30; Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy* (New York: WW Norton, 2005), p. 595.

70. Rayback, op. cit. p. 26.

71. Richards, op. cit. p. 196.

72. Stewart, op. cit. pp. 111, 112, 114–16.

73. Ibid., pp. 117–18, date for quote is Oct. 30, 1846.

74. Ibid., pp. 126–28, 132, 134, 146, 152.

75. Ibid., pp. 141–43; Richards, op. cit. p. 191.

76. The faction earned its name from the story of the old Dutch farmer who was so contrary that he burned down his barn in order to get rid of the rats infesting it.

77. Ibid., p. 70.

78. Ibid., pp. 73–75.

79. Sewell, op. cit. p. 130. See the footnotes in Sewell chapter 6, pp. 130–51 for evidence of this correspondence. Frederick Blue, *No Taint of Compromise* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), p. 52.

80. Rayback, op. cit. p. 106.

81. Harrold, op. cit. p. 111; Richards, op. cit. pp. 197, 199.

82. Harrold, op. cit. p. 110; Sewell, op. cit. pp. 76, 121.

83. Sewell, op. cit. pp. 115–16; Johnson, op. cit. p. 128; Volpe, op. cit. pp. 129–30.

84. Rayback, op. cit. p. 99; Sewell, op. cit. pp. 116–18. Smith to Birney April 18, 1846 quoted in Sewell p. 118.

85. Jackson to Birney April 23, 1847, quoted in Davis, op. cit. p. 234.

86. Sewell, op. cit. p. 120; Volpe, op. cit. p. 129.

87. Harrold, op. cit. p. 113; Volpe, op. cit. p. 127.

88. Harrold, op. cit. p. 114.

89. Davis, op. cit. p. 241.

90. Sewell, op. cit. pp. 136–37; Volpe, op. cit. p. 127; Rayback, op. cit. p. 110.

91. James D. Bilotta, *Race and the Rise of the Republican Party* (NY: Xlibris, 2002), p. 131.

92. Wilentz, op. cit. pp. 609–10.

93. Chase to Sumner December 2, 1847 quoted in ibid., p. 610.

Chapter 3: Fusion and Free Soil, 1848

1. Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy* (New York: WW Norton, 2005), pp. 613–14; James B. Stewart, *Joshua R. Giddings and the Tactics of Radical Politics* (Cleveland: Case Western Reserve University Press, 1970), p. 150.

2. Michael F. Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 263–69; Wilentz, op. cit. p. 617.

3. Frederick Blue, *Salmon P. Chase: A Life in Politics* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1987), p. 58; Joseph G. Rayback, *Free Soil: The Election of 1848* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1970), p. 183.

4. Rayback, op. cit. p. 183; Holt, op. cit. pp. 319–20. On Taylor's candidacy see also Thomas G. Mitchell, *Indian Fighters Turned American Politicians* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003).
5. Wilentz, op. cit. pp. 615–16; Rayback, op. cit. p. 184.
6. Rayback, op. cit. p. 184.
7. Holt, op. cit. pp. 322–26. The discrepancy in the number of total votes occurs in Holt's original work. Rayback, op. cit. p. 196.
8. Holt, op. cit. pp. 326–27; Rayback, p. 199.
9. Holt, p. 334.
10. Rayback, op. cit. p. 205; Blue, op. cit. p. 59.
11. Wilentz, op. cit. p. 618; quote is from Rayback, op. cit. p. 201.
12. Wilentz, op. cit. p. 618; Rayback, op. cit. p. 210.
13. Rayback, op. cit. p. 212; Richard H. Sewell, *Ballots For Freedom* (NY: WW Norton, 1976), p. 150.
14. Rayback, op. cit. pp. 212–18.
15. Reinhard G. Johnson, *The Liberty Party in New England 1840–1848* (PhD dissertation: Syracuse University, 1976), pp. 452, 456.
16. Sewell, op. cit. pp. 156–57.
17. Rayback, op. cit. pp. 225, 228; Frederick Blue, *The Free Soilers: Third Party Politics 1848–1854* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973), p. 77. Sewell lists the same number of votes for Van Buren and Hale but lists 23 for Giddings, 13 for Adams and four scattered—or two less votes than Rayback: Sewell, op. cit. p. 157.
18. Sewell, op. cit. p. 138. Sewell cites his own biography of Hale: Richard H. Sewell, *John P. Hale and the Politics of Abolition* (Cambridge, MA, 1965), pp. 95–96.
19. Blue, *Free Soilers*, p. 78. The *Amistad* was a Spanish slaver whose slave cargo mutinied, killed most of the crew, and then sailed to Boston. The slaves were tried for murder with Lewis Tappan funding their legal defense. John Q. Adams was engaged to argue their appeal before the Supreme Court and won their acquittal.
20. Wilentz, op. cit. p. 626; Hugh Davis, *Joshua Leavitt: Evangelical Abolitionist* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), p. 246. Davis claims on the previous page that Leavitt also had a hand in writing the platform.
21. Davis, op. cit. pp. 246–47.
22. *Chronotipe* August 12 and 13, 1848 and September 20, 1848 quoted in Laurence B. Goodheart, *Abolitionist, Actuary, Atheist: Elizur Wright and the Reform Impulse* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1990), pp. 133–34.
23. On Smith's post-1848 political career see Octavius Frothingham, *Gerrit Smith: A Biography* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), pp. 187–94; and John Stauffer, *The Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001). Stauffer claims that the party was called the National Liberty Party from 1848–55, which would have been ironic as it operated almost exclusively in New York.
24. Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Lewis Tappan and the Evangelical War Against Slavery* (Cleveland: Case Western Reserve University Press, 1969), p. 282.
25. Vernon L. Volpe, *Forlorn Hope of Freedom* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1990), pp. 130–31; Sewell, op. cit. pp. 160–62 and an email to the author in Nov. 2005.
26. Stewart, op. cit. p. 148.

27. James D. Bilotta, *Race and the Rise of the Republican Party* (NY: Xlibris, 2002), pp. 79–81. Seward considered himself a disciple of Adams. Charles Adams was of course his son and Giddings worked with him in the House against the gag rule.

28. Wilentz, op. cit. p. 624.

29. Bilotta, op. cit. pp. 103, 107–10; Sewell, op. cit. p. 173.

30. Ibid., pp. 93–95, 176. See Stauffer, op. cit. The book is a biography not only of Smith but also of Douglass, McCune Smith and John Brown and their relationships in the 1850s.

31. Bilotta, op. cit. p. 133. Douglass was a speaker at the 1852 Free Democrat convention. On his relations with Smith see Stauffer, op. cit.

32. Henry Mayer, *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), pp. 382–83; Aileen S. Kraditor, *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism* (Chicago: Elephant, 1989), pp. 181–89; Rayback, op. cit. p. 250; James B. Stewart, *Wendell Phillips: Liberty's Hero* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), p. 138.

33. Stewart, *Giddings*, pp. 158–59.

34. Rayback, op. cit. pp. 255, 258, 266; John Mayfield, *Rehearsal For Republicanism: Free Soil and the Politics of Anti-Slavery* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat, 1980), p. 122; David H. Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), pp. 131–32.

35. Rayback, op. cit. p. 266; Sewell, pp. 162–63.

36. Rayback, op. cit. pp. 256–57.

37. Mayfield, op. cit. pp. 119–21; Sewell, op. cit. pp. 165–66; Davis, op. cit. p. 249; Wilentz, op. cit. pp. 627–28.

38. Blue, *Free Soilers*, p. 144. See Mayfield for maps in the appendix showing the counties where the party won a plurality of the vote in 1848 and 1852.

39. Mayfield, op. cit. pp. 121–24; Holt, op. cit. p. 377 Table 28; Wilentz, op. cit. p. 630. In NY the gubernatorial candidate was Barnburner John Dix and his running mate was Liberty man Seth Gates. In MA the gubernatorial candidate was Whig Stephen Phillips and his running mate was a Democrat.

40. Rayback, op. cit. pp. 287–88, 302.

41. The twelve members were: Charles Allen (MA); Walter Boot* (CT); Charles Durkee (WI); Joshua Giddings (OH); John Howe* (PA); George Julian (IN); Preston King (NY); Horace Mann* (MA); Joseph Root (OH); William Sprague* (MI); Amos Tuck (NH); and David Wilmot (PA). The asterick signifies a member elected by a coalition and who usually voted with the Free Soilers.

42. See Blue, *Free Soilers*, pp. 142, 302 Table 1 for vote totals and percentages, Appendix C for the list of congressmen.

43. Holt, op. cit. p. 376; Rayback, op. cit. pp. 299, 301, 303, 305. But with the New York vote subtracted, the *combined* Whig and Liberty Free Soil vote outnumbers the Democratic Free Soil vote.

44. Wilentz, op. cit. pp. 610–11, 619; Rayback, op. cit. pp. 298–99, 309.

Chapter 4: Coalition, Compromise, and Collape

1. James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1989), p. 67.

2. Stanley Harrold, *Gamaliel Bailey and Antislavery Union* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1986), pp. 133–34, quote is on p. 134.

3. James B. Stewart, *Joshua R. Giddings and the Tactics of Radical Politics* (Cleveland: Case Western Reserve University Press, 1970), p. 167; David H. Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), p. 119.
4. Stewart, op. cit. pp. 169–70; Donald, op. cit. pp. 135–37.
5. Richard H. Sewell, *Ballots For Freedom* (New York: WW Norton, 1976), pp. 211–13.
6. Ibid., pp. 214–15; Martin B. Duberman, *Charles Francis Adams 1807–1886* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960), p. 160.
7. Sewell, op. cit. pp. 216–18.
8. Ibid., p. 218.
9. Michael F. Holt, *The Fate of Their Country* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), pp. 57–59.
10. Ibid., p. 61.
11. Ibid., pp. 63–67.
12. David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis 1848–1861* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1976), pp. 99–100; Holt, op. cit. pp. 68–69, 73, 74.
13. Potter, op. cit. p. 101.
14. Ibid., pp. 101–02; Frederick Blue, *No Taint of Compromise* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), p. 55; Frederick Blue, *Charles Sumner and the Conscience of the North* (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1994), p. 54.
15. Potter, op. cit. p. 102.
16. Ibid., pp. 88–89; Stewart, op. cit. p. 171.
17. Potter, op. cit. pp. 103–08; Stewart, op. cit. p. 182 for the *Emancipator* quote, which was from the July 18, 1850 issue.
18. Arthur Schlesinger, *The Age of Jackson* (Boston: Little Brown, 1945); Glyndon Van Deusen, *The Jacksonian Era 1828–1848* (New York: Harper, 1966); Michael F. Holt, *Political Parties and American Political Development From the Age of Jackson to the Age of Lincoln* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992). This author argued previously that this era was also the era of the Indian-fighter politicians, but no single one was as crucial as Douglas and that era also overlapped with the Age of Jackson. See Thomas G. Mitchell, *Indian Fighters Turned American Politicians* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003).
19. Holt, *Fate*, pp. 78, 80.
20. Potter, op. cit. pp. 110–13; Frederick Blue, *The Free Soilers: Third Party Politics 1848–54* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973), p. 303; Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy* (New York: WW Norton, 2005), p. 644.
21. Stewart, op. cit. p. 195.
22. Wilentz, op. cit. pp. 645–52; Stewart, op. cit. p. 187.
23. Potter, op. cit. p. 119 quoting from Stanley W. Campbell, *The Slave Catchers: Enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law 1850–60* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1968) Table 12 p. 207; Holt, *Fate*, p. 87.
24. Potter, op. cit. pp. 119–20; Holt, *Fate*, p. 80.
25. Michael F. Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 596.
26. Holt, *Fate*, pp. 88, 91.
27. Harrold, op. cit. pp. 150–51.
28. Holt, *Whig Party*, pp. 680, 682, 707.

29. Ibid., pp. 700–01.
30. Potter, op. cit. pp. 141–42. See also Mitchell, op. cit. for background on both Pierce and Scott and the 1852 campaign.
31. Holt, *Whig Party*, pp. 713, 717.
32. Ibid., pp. 720–25.
33. Adams to Sumner, June 23, 1852, quoted in Sewell, op. cit. p. 243.
34. Harrold, op. cit. p. 151; Sewell, op. cit. p. 243.
35. Harrold, op. cit. p. 152. The Chase article appeared in the July 29, 1852 issue.
36. Sewell, op. cit. pp. 243–44.
37. The Liberty Party of Smith met at Syracuse on September 30 and nominated William Goodell as its candidate for president, *ibid.*, p. 246n; John Mayfield, *Rehearsal For Republicanism: Free Soil and the Politics of Anti-Slavery* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat, 1980), p. 180.
38. Sewell, pp. 244–45; Blue, *Free Soilers*, pp. 241, 293–302 Appendices A and B; Mayfield, op. cit. p. 180; Stewart, op. cit. p. 214.
39. Sewell, op. cit. p. 246; Blue, *Free Soilers*, pp. 242–43.
40. Willey to Hale, Aug. 19, 1852 quoted in Sewell, op. cit. p. 246, Sewell, op. cit. p. 247.
41. Blue, *Free Soilers*, pp. 248–49; Stewart, op. cit. p. 200.
42. Sewell, pp. 248–49; Blue, *Free Soilers*, pp. 251–53; Thomas C. Smith, *The Liberty and Free Soil Parties in the Northwest* (New York: Longmans, 1897), p. 251; Mayfield, op. cit. p. 181.
43. Holt, *Whig Party*, pp. 742, 746, 753, 763.
44. Ibid., p. 757 Table 30; Potter, op. cit. pp. 234–35.
45. Potter, op. cit. pp. 238–39; Wilentz, op. cit. pp. 665–66.
46. Blue, *Free Soilers*, p. 255 Table 2.
47. Mayfield, op. cit. pp. 141–42.
48. Ibid., p. 158.
49. Sewell, op. cit. pp. 227–29; Potter, op. cit. p. 228.
50. John Stauffer, *The Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 174–79.
51. Sewell, op. cit. p. 219.
52. Ibid., p. 220.
53. Diary of Charles F. Adams, August 10, 1850 quoted in Blue, *Free Soilers*, p. 214.
54. Ibid., p. 221.
55. Chase to Sumner, April 28, 1851, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 222. On Chase and Hale see Frederick Blue, *Salmon P. Chase: A Life in Politics* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1987), pp. 77, 79.
56. Wilson to Sumner, December 21, 1852, quoted in Richard H. Abbot, *Cobbler in Congress: The Life of Henry Wilson 1812–1875* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1972), p. 49, pp. 42–49.
57. Duberman, op. cit. pp. 175.
58. Abbot, op. cit. pp. 50–52.
59. Ibid., pp. 53–55; Duberman, op. cit. p. 186.
60. Blue, *Chase*, 69–70, 72; Sewell, op. cit. pp. 206–09; Stewart, op. cit. p. 175.
61. Sewell, op. cit. p. 210; Stewart, op. cit. pp. 178, 193–94; Mayfield, op. cit. pp. 170–71.

62. Stewart, op. cit. pp. 200–01; Giddings to Chase, Aug. 12, 1851 quoted in Mayfield, op. cit. p. 171.
63. Stewart, op. cit. pp. 203–05.
64. Mayfield, op. cit. pp. 172–73; Smith, op. cit. pp. 242–46.
65. Blue, *Chase*, p. 89.
66. Stewart, op. cit. pp. 215–16.
67. Ibid., pp. 208–09, 211.
68. Smith, op. cit. pp. 258, 261; *ibid.*, p. 91.
69. Smith, op. cit. p. 271; Sewell, op. cit. pp. 252–53.
70. See Thomas G. Mitchell, *Indispensable Traitors: Liberal Parties in Settler Conflicts* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002) for details.

Chapter 5: Multiparty America: The Competition for Opposition Party, 1854–56

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2. William E. Gienapp, *The Origins of the Republican Party 1852–1856* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 72–74.
3. Potter, op. cit. p. 162; Richard H. Sewell, *Ballots For Freedom* (New York: WW Norton, 1976), pp. 255–56, 260–61, quote is from Giddings to G.R. Giddings Feb. 12, 1854; Frederick Blue, *The Free Soilers: Third Party Politics 1848–1854* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973), p. 280; Michael F. Holt, *The Political Crisis of the 1850s* (New York: WW Norton, 1983), p. 153; Stanley Harrold, *Gamaliel Bailey and the Antislavery Union* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1986), p. 171; James B. Stewart, *Joshua R. Giddings and the Tactics of Radical Politics* (Cleveland: Case Western Reserve University Press, 1970), p. 226.
4. Sewell, op. cit. p. 256.
5. William H. Seward speech in the Senate on Feb. 17, 1854 reprinted in the *National Era* March 9, 1854.
6. *National Era* April 20, 1854.
7. Potter, op. cit. pp. 247–48; John C. Batchelor, “Ain’t You Glad You Joined the Republicans?” (New York: Henry Holt, 1996), p. 11 for Greeley quote; Jeter A. Isely, *Horace Greeley and the Republican Party 1853–1861* (New York: Octagon, 1965), pp. 36, 41, 67, 80, 86.
8. Isely, op. cit. pp. 13, 20–21, 73, 76, 81.
9. Batchelor, op. cit. p. 18; Sewell, op. cit. p. 264; Potter, op. cit. p. 248.
10. Potter, op. cit. pp. 166–67, 326; Gienapp, op. cit. p. 81.
11. Tyler Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know Nothings and the Politics of the 1850s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 164, 169, 238–39.
12. Gienapp, op. cit. p. 104.
13. Ibid., pp. 107–15.
14. Stewart, op. cit. pp. 227–28; Gienapp, op. cit. pp. 116–20.
15. Gienapp, op. cit. pp. 121–26.
16. Holt, op. cit. p. 170; Gienapp, op. cit. p. 82.
17. The Softs were those Hunkers who favored allowing the Barnburners back into the party; the Hards opposed letting them back in.

18. Gienapp, op. cit. pp. 148–60, quote is from Butler to Martin Van Buren Dec. 2, 1854.

19. Anbinder, op. cit. pp. 3–8. The American Republicans demanded an end to all public funding of parochial schools.

20. Ibid., pp. 13, 15, 20–21; Ray A. Billington, *The Protestant Crusade 1800–1860* (New York: Rinehart & Co., 1952), pp. 381–82; Giernapp, op. cit. p. 100.

21. Billington, op. cit. pp. 382, 384; Anbinder, op. cit. p. 162.

22. Billington, op. cit. pp. 386–87; Anbinder, op. cit. p. 41; Michael F. Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party: Jacksonian Politics and the Onset of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 858; Gienapp, op. cit. p. 92.

23. See Summers, op. cit. p. 66; Holt, *The Political Crisis*, pp. 135–38.

24. Anbinder, op. cit. pp. 45–50, 67; Gienapp, op. cit. p. 94.

25. Gienapp, op. cit. p. 136.

26. Billington, op. cit. pp. 388–90.

27. Ibid., pp. 391–94.

28. Richard H. Abbott, *Cobbler in Congress: The Life of Henry Wilson, 1812–1875* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1972), pp. 55–59; Gienapp, op. cit. p. 134.

29. Abbott, op. cit. pp. 60–67.

30. Ibid., pp. 68–70.

31. Gienapp, op. cit. pp. 162–63.

32. Billington, op. cit. pp. 394, 396.

33. Holt, *Whig Party*, p. 856.

34. Billington, op. cit. pp. 410–16.

35. Ibid., pp. 418–21.

36. Anbinder, op. cit. pp. 100–01; Gienapp, op. cit. pp. 163–64.

37. Hendrick Booream V, *The Formation of the Republican Party in New York: Politics and Conscience in the Antebellum North* (New York: New York University Press, 1983), pp. 56, 57, 60, 63–64, quote is from the NY *Evening Journal* Nov. 15, 1854.

38. Ibid., pp. 66–74; Gienapp, op. cit. p. 78.

39. Anbinder, op. cit. pp. 163–64.

40. Gienapp, op. cit. p. 93; Booream, p. 75; Anbinder, op. cit. pp. 164–66.

41. Abbott, op. cit. p. 73.

42. Anbinder, op. cit. pp. 167–71; Abbott, op. cit. p. 74.

43. Abbott, op. cit. p. 74.

44. Ibid., pp. 172, 174 quote is from a letter from Minor to Daniel Ullmann on July 14, 1855.

45. Stewart, op. cit. pp. 232–34.

46. Anbinder, op. cit. pp. 175–80, 193–94; Frederick Blue, *Salmon P. Chase: A Life in Politics*; Isely, op. cit. p. 112.

47. Anbinder, op. cit. pp. 195–96.

48. Sewell, op. cit. pp. 268–69.

49. Abbott, op. cit. pp. 74–77.

50. Booraem, op. cit. pp. 76, 118, 122, 128–30.

51. Ibid., pp. 138–39, 156–58, 162–63, 166.

52. Ibid., pp. 133, 167–68, 171, 174.

53. Sewell, op. cit. p. 277; Gienapp, op. cit. pp. 318–25.

Chapter 6: Free Soil, Free Men, and Fremont

All dates mentioned in this chapter refer to the year 1856 unless specifically mentioned otherwise.

1. Michael F. Holt, *Forging a Majority: The Formation of the Republican Party in Pittsburgh, 1848–1860* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), pp. 124, 164, 176; Stanley Harrold, *Gamaliel Bailey and the Antislavery Union* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1986), pp. 175–76.

2. Harrold, op. cit. pp. 176–77, Bailey to Chase February 21, 1856 for quote.

3. William Gienapp, *The Origins of the Republican Party, 1852–1856* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 254–58; Richard H. Sewell, *Ballots For Freedom* (New York: WW Norton, 1976), p. 278; Holt, op. cit. pp. 176–77.

4. Michael F. Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 963–64; Tyler Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know Nothings and the Politics of the 1850s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 209–11; Gienapp, op. cit. p. 262.

5. Gienapp, op. cit. pp. 251–52, Weed to Marcy March 7, 1856 quoted on p. 251.

6. Anbinder, op. cit. p. 209.

7. Gienapp, op. cit. p. 263.

8. George H. Mayer, *The Republican Party 1854–1966* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 39–40; Sewell, op. cit. p. 263; Gienapp, op. cit. pp. 288–89, 294–95; Ruhl J. Bartlett, *John C. Fremont and the Republican Party* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1930), p. 10.

9. Anbinder, op. cit. pp. 215–16.

10. Anbinder, op. cit. pp. 216–17.

11. Gienapp, op. cit. pp. 322–26; Bartlett, op. cit. p. 16.

12. Frederick Blue, *Charles Sumner and the Conscience of the North* (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1994), pp. 88–89, 92; John M. Taylor, *William Henry Seward: Lincoln's Right Hand* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), p. 102; Glyndon Van Deusen, *William Henry Seward* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 170.

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14. *Ibid.*, pp. 95–99, 103.

15. See Jeter A. Isely, *Horace Greeley and the Republican Party, 1853–1861* (New York: Octagon, 1965), pp. 131, 142.

16. Isely, op. cit. p. 157.

17. *Ibid.*; Roy Franklin Nichols, *The Disruption of American Democracy* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), pp. 28–31.

18. James G. Hollandsworth, Jr., *Pretense of Glory: The Life of General Nathaniel P. Banks* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), pp. 28–29.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 30; Gienapp, op. cit. pp. 270, 331–32.

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21. Isely, op. cit. pp. 158, 162–63, 167.

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23. Ibid., pp. 344, 383, 386, 389.
24. Robert J. Scarry, *Millard Fillmore* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co. Inc., 2001), pp. 273–76, 281–82; Anbinder, op. cit. p. 223.
25. Anbinder, op. cit. p. 233.
26. Scarry, op. cit. p. 283; Holt, *Whig Party*, pp. 972–74.
27. Holt, *Whig Party*, pp. 976–77.
28. Gienapp, op. cit. pp. 377–78.
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30. Ibid., p. 379; see Louis Filler, *The Crusade Against Slavery, 1830–1860* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1963), p. 189; Sewell, op. cit. p. 225.
31. Isely, op. cit. pp. 171, 175–77.
32. Dana to Henry C. Carey November 27, 1856 quoted in Gienapp, op. cit. p. 358.
33. Gienapp, op. cit. pp. 360–62, 365–67, the quote (p. 367) is from the Aug. 9, 1856 issue.
34. Ibid., pp. 368–71; Bartlett, op. cit. pp. 39–40.
35. Ibid., p. 373; Michael F. Holt, *Forging* p. 192.
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38. Bartlett, op. cit. pp. 32–36; Potter, op. cit. p. 215.
39. Anbinder, op. cit. p. 237.
40. Ibid., pp. 240–42.
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51. Bartlett, op. cit. pp. 41–44.
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55. Anbinder, op. cit. pp. 244–45.

Chapter 7: Kansas and John Brown

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2. Sengupta, op. cit. pp. 29, 31, 37, 41–43, 119.

3. Sengupta, op. cit. p. 64.
4. Ibid., pp. 87, 99.
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6. Stampp, op. cit. p. 145.
7. Wilentz, op. cit. pp. 686–87.
8. David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848–1861* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1976), pp. 206–07.
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11. Scott, op. cit. pp. 192–94, 203, 217, 228.
12. Ibid., pp. 207–12.
13. Potter, op. cit. pp. 214–15; Andrew W. Crandall, *The Early History of the Republican Party, 1854–1856* (Boston: Gorham Press, 1930), pp. 229, 248–50; Sengupta, op. cit. p. 133.
14. Scott, op. cit. pp. 270–76.
15. Sengupta, op. cit. p. 134; Stampp, op. cit. p. 146; James P. Shenton, *Robert John Walker: A Politician From Jackson to Lincoln* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), pp. 140, 145–47.
16. Stampp, op. cit. pp. 147–48, 158.
17. Ibid., pp. 159–61.
18. Ibid., pp. 160, 164; Shenton, op. cit. pp. 142, 152.
19. Stampp, op. cit. p. 167, 270–71; Shenton, pp. 157–58, 173.
20. Shenton, op. cit. pp. 165–66, 172; Stampp, op. cit. pp. 179–80, 261–63.
21. Shenton, op. cit. pp. 174–75.
22. See Wilentz, op. cit. p. 716; Roy F. Nichols, *The Disruption of American Democracy* (New York: Free Press, 1967), pp. 87–89, 134–35; Stampp, op. cit. pp. 283–85.
23. Stampp, pp. 274, 277; *Herald of Freedom* quote is from November 21, 1857, p. 274).
24. For two different versions of the meeting see: Nichols, op. cit. p. 137; Wilentz, op. cit. p. 717. Apparently the sin of the two senators was to vote against Jackson's proposed removal of the Cherokee from Georgia. Rives became a Whig; Tallmadge became the territorial governor of Wisconsin in the 1840s.
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31. Ibid., pp. 327–29; Johannsen, op. cit. pp. 606, 609–10.
32. Stampp, op. cit. p. 330; Johannsen, op. cit. p. 613.
33. Johannsen, op. cit. p. 634.

34. Scott, op. cit. pp. 65–72 for brief backgrounds of the six; see James M. McPherson, *The Struggle For Equality* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 6–7, 14; Potter, op. cit. p. 364.

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37. Ibid., pp. 231–32.

38. Ibid., pp. 233, 235; Potter, op. cit. pp. 360, 361.

39. Potter, op. cit. pp. 357–58.

40. Ibid., pp. 361, 367; Scott, op. cit. pp. 250, 252.

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42. Scott, op. cit. p. 260.

43. Ibid., pp. 261, 265–66, 268; Potter, op. cit. p. 367.

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45. Scott, op. cit. p. 286.

46. Potter, op. cit. p. 368.

47. Ibid., pp. 369–72. Quote is from Lincoln's address at Cooper Institute, New York on Feb. 27, 1860.

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10. Mulkern, op. cit. pp. 185.
11. Anbinder, op. cit. pp. 254–58; Jeter A. Isely, *Horace Greeley and the Republican Party, 1853–1861* (New York: Octagon, 1965), pp. 250–52, editorial was on Sep. 14, 1858.
12. Ibid., 265–69; Kenneth M. Stampp, *America in 1857: A Nation on the Brink* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 286.
13. Nichols, op. cit. p. 272; Stampp, op. cit. p. 279.
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16. Ibid., pp. 22–27; Carwardine, op. cit. p. 24.
17. Burlingame, op. cit. p. 28.
18. Ibid., pp. 236–58; Carwardine, op. cit. pp. 61, 63. According to Carwardine (p. 59), one of every eight Illinoisans was foreign born in 1850 and one in five by 1860. Most of these were German-Americans.
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23. Fehrenbacher, *Prelude*, pp. 82–83, 89.
24. Don E. Fehrenbacher, *(The Dred Scott Case: Its Significance in American Law and Politics)* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 485, 487–88.
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32. Ibid., pp. 113–14.
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37. Potter, op. cit. pp. 354–55; Fehrenbacher, *Prelude*, pp. 117–20; Johannsen, op. cit. p. 678.
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40. Thomas Brown, *Politics and Statesmanship: Essays on the American Whig Party* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp. 93–116; Van Deusen, op. cit. p. 103.
41. Striner, op. cit. p. 91.
42. Fehrenbacher, *Prelude*, pp. 144–45, *Dred Scott*, p. 515.
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44. Marvin R. Cain, *Edward Bates of Missouri* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1965), pp. 95, 97–101.
45. Carwardine, op. cit. p. 112.
46. Stanley Harrold, *Gamaliel Bailey and the Antislavery Union* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1986), pp. 185, 211.
47. Ibid., p. 208, Bailey to Chase Jan. 16, 1859.
48. Ibid., pp. 206–212.
49. Albert D. Kirwan, *John J. Crittenden: The Struggle For the Union* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1962), p. 348; George H. Mayer, *The Republican Party, 1854–1966* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 61.

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5. Glyndon Van Deusen, *William Henry Seward* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 217, 219–20; Frederick Blue, *Charles Sumner and the Conscience of the North* (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1994), p. 111.
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8. Marvin R. Cain, *Edward Bates of Missouri* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1965), pp. 102–08.
9. Hans L. Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade* (New York: Twayne, 1963), pp. 121–26.

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11. Goodwin, op. cit. p. 229; William and Bruce Catton, *Two Roads to Sumter* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963), pp. 216–17; George H. Mayer, *The Republican Party, 1854–1966* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 67; Melvin Hayes, *Mr. Lincoln Runs For President* (New York: Citadel Press, 1960), pp. 38, 45–46.
12. Cain, op. cit. p. 109.
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22. Catton, op. cit. pp. 226–27; Hayes, op. cit. p. 66; Hans L. Trefousse, *The Radical Republicans* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1969), pp. 134–35; Mayer, op. cit. pp. 65–66.
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77. McPherson, op. cit. pp. 222–23, 232; Wilentz, op. cit. pp. 765, 775; Catton, op. cit. pp. 244–45; Cawardine, op. cit. p. 131; Heck, op. cit. p. 90. The Free Soilers polled 14 percent in the North in 1848.
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Chapter 10: Secession and War

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3. Burton J. Hendrick, *Lincoln's War Cabinet* (Boston: Little Brown, 1946), pp. 110–12.
4. Hendrick, op. cit. pp. 4, 7; James B. Stewart, *Joshua R. Giddings and the Tactics of Radical Politics* (Cleveland: Case Western Reserve University Press, 1970), p. 274.
5. Hendrick, op. cit. p. 33 claimed nine parties but the author could only find evidence for seven:

- 1) The Whigs 1834–1840; 2) Liberty Party 1841–48; 3) Free Soil Party 1848–51; 4) Democratic Party (OH) 1851–52; 5) Free Democrats 1852–54; 6) Republicans

1854–1872; 7) Liberal Democrats 1872. And the Free Soil Party and the Free Democrats were the same party. Hendrick probably felt that he was also a Know Nothing in 1855 and possibly an Independent Democrat in 1854 because of his “Appeal of the Independent Democrats” in January 1854, but this was just another name for the Free Democrats.

6. Hendrick, op. cit. pp. 36–40.

7. David H. Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), pp. 264–65.

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10. Ibid., pp. 62–70.

11. Ibid., pp. 6, 72–77.

12. Ibid., pp. 79, 94, 102. Donald, op. cit. p. 265 claimed that Judd was eliminated because he was from Illinois and that state was already well represented by Lincoln.

13. Goodwin, op. cit. p. 319.

14. Hendrick, op. cit. pp. 229–57.

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17. Davis, op. cit. pp. 13, 28.

18. Potter, op. cit. pp. 491, 496–99; Davis, op. cit. pp. 15–16.

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25. Potter, *Lincoln*, 110–11; Albert D. Kirwan, *John J. Crittenden: The Struggle For the Union* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1962), p. 378.

26. See Kirwan, op. cit. for details on Crittenden and pp. 373–74 on his opening role in the crisis. See also Michael F. Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 404–10 for his role in the formation of the Taylor administration and 525–28 in the Fillmore administration.

27. Kirwan, op. cit. pp. 375–76 for the text of the resolutions and amendments, p. 377 for the speech.

28. Fehrenbacher, op. cit. pp. 445–50; McPherson, op. cit. p. 254; Potter, *Lincoln*, p. 100; Kirwan, op. cit. pp. 381, 383.

29. Lincoln to Trumbull, Dec. 10, 1860 quoted in Potter, *Lincoln*, p. 157.

30. Potter, *Lincoln*, pp. 157–59, *New York Tribune* Dec. 22, 1860.

31. Potter, *Lincoln*, pp. 165–67, 170.
32. George H. Mayer, *The Republican Party 1854–1966* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 80; Frederick Blue, *Charles Sumner and the Conscience of the North* (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1994), pp. 120–21.
33. Potter, *Lincoln*, pp. 176–81, 184; Kirwan, op. cit. p. 370.
34. McPherson, op. cit. pp. 256–57; Potter, *Lincoln*, pp. 307–08; Roy F. Nichols, *The Disruption of American Democracy* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), pp. 466, 476; Kirwan, op. cit. pp. 408, 412, 416, 421.
35. Potter, *Lincoln*, pp. 308–09; Kirwan, op. cit. p. 408.
36. Hendrick, op. cit. pp. 248–49, 253–54; Nichols, op. cit. pp. 469, 471.
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40. Potter, *Lincoln*, pp. 340–43, 345, 348; Davis, *A Government*, p. 209; Richard N. Current, *Lincoln and the First Shot* (New York: Lippincott, 1963), pp. 73–74.
41. Potter, *Lincoln*, pp. 352, 361; Current, op. cit. pp. 80–81, 95, 96.
42. Potter, *Lincoln*, pp. 362, 366.
43. Davis, *A Government*, pp. 199–200, 211, 213, 218.
44. *Ibid.*, pp. 219, 308.
45. William and Bruce Catton, *Two Roads to Sumter* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963), pp. 255, 257, 275, 278; Davis, *A Government*, pp. 29, 248. The other federal arsenal was in Springfield, MA where it was safely protected from Southern invasion.
46. Potter, *Lincoln*, p. 544; McPherson, op. cit. p. 266.
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48. Taylor, op. cit. pp. 145, 152–53.
49. Potter, *Crisis*, pp. 575, 578–80.
50. *Ibid.*, pp. 582–83; McPherson, op. cit. pp. 273–74.
51. McPherson, op. cit. p. 272.
52. *Philadelphia Ledger* Dec. 28, 1860 quoted in *ibid.*, p. 248.
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7. T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and His Generals* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1958), pp. 43, 47, 56, 60.
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17. Ibid., pp. 85, 134, 138–39, 154; Williams, *Radicals*, pp. 149–50.
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20. See Chapter 2.
21. Williams, *Radicals*, pp. 62, 64; Burton J. Hendrick, *Lincoln's War Cabinet* (Boston: Little Brown, 1946), p. 281.
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23. Ibid., pp. 155, 202–03; McPherson, op. cit. pp. 414–15; Frederick Blue, *Salmon P. Chase: A Life in Politics* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1987), p. 212.
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30. Hendrick, op. cit. pp. 308–15.
31. Ibid., pp. 333–43; Goodwin, op. cit. pp. 490–92.
32. Hendrick, op. cit. pp. 344–45; Goodwin, op. cit. pp. 492–94; Edgar T. Welles, ed. *The Diary of Gideon Welles Vol. I* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), p. 205 for quote; Donald, op. cit. p. 405 for Lincoln quote.
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37. Ibid., pp. 369–70.
38. Welles, op. cit. *Vol. I* pp. 67–68, 112, 138–39, 205.
39. Hendrick, op. cit. p. 347.

Chapter 12: The Road to Emancipation

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2. Ibid., pp. 419–21; William K. Klingaman, *Abraham Lincoln and the Road to Emancipation* (New York: Viking, 2001), p. 122.

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4. Ibid., pp. 463–71.
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8. Ibid., p. 20; James M. McPherson, *The Struggle For Equality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 107–08; Klingaman, op. cit. pp. 127, 129.
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11. Klingaman, op. cit. pp. 91, 93; Henry Mayer, *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), p. 531; McPherson, *Struggle*, pp. 92–93.
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26. Ibid., pp. 537–42, 544.
27. Lincoln to Belmont July 31, 1862 in Striner, op. cit. p. 175, p. 179.
28. Klingaman, op. cit. pp. 180, 186–89.
29. McPherson, *Battle Cry*, pp. 557–58.
30. Hendrick, op. cit. pp. 363–65; Klingaman, op. cit. pp. 197–98; Taylor, op. cit. p. 203.
31. Mayer, op. cit. pp. 541–44.

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37. Striner, op. cit. p. 185.

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39. McPherson, *Battle Cry*, p. 562; Klingaman, op. cit. pp. 209–10; Blue, *Chase*, pp. 197–98.

40. McPherson, *Struggle*, pp. 197–98. See also the chapter on Bleeding Kansas.

41. Mayer, op. cit. p. 547; Williams, op. cit. p. 217 quote is from the *Boston Courier* Jan. 7, 1863.

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44. McPherson, *Struggle*, pp. 204–05.

45. Ibid., pp. 203, 205–06.

46. Ibid., p. 206; McPherson, *Battle Cry*, pp. 686–87.

47. McPherson, *Battle Cry*, pp. 634, 637–38.

48. Lincoln to Conkling August 26, 1863 quoted in McPherson, *Struggle*, p. 212.

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50. Ibid., p. 209; Blue, *Chase*, p. 216.

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52. Ibid., pp. 188–91.

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7. Harlan H. Horner, *Lincoln and Greeley* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1953), pp. 338–39; quotes are from the *New York Tribune* Feb. 24, 1864 and Mar. 11, 1864.

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9. Blue, op. cit. p. 226; ; Ruhl J. Bartlett, *John C. Fremont and the Republican Party* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1930), pp. 106, 108; Niven, op. cit. pp. 361–62; Waugh, op. cit. p. 120.

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13. Zornow, op. cit. pp. 66–71.

14. Waugh, op. cit. pp. 138–46; Brown, op. cit. p. 249.

15. Waugh, op. cit. pp. 197–98, 201.

16. Waugh, op. cit. pp. 124–25.

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28. Zornow, op. cit. pp. 84–85; Waugh, op. cit. p. 181; Raymond quote is from *New York Times* June 4, 1864; McPherson, *Struggle*, pp. 272–73.

29. Donald, *Lincoln*, p. 503.

30. Abbott, op. cit. p. 152; Bartlett, op. cit. p. 104.

31. Bartlett, op. cit. pp. 111–12; quote is from a letter from Thomas B. Lincoln to William Johnson on June 11, 1864; Zornow, op. cit. p. 75.

32. McPherson, *Struggle*, pp. 273–74.

33. Ibid., p. 276.
34. Ibid., pp. 275–77.
35. McPherson, *Battle Cry*, pp. 733, 735.
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40. Horner, op. cit. pp. 292, 296–317.
41. Bartlett, op. cit. pp. 116–17; Donald, *Lincoln*, pp. 510–12.
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4. Ibid., pp. 176, 182–85; James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Ballantine, 1989), p. 841.

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11. Ibid., p. 852; Donald, op. cit. pp. 585–99. The author has visited Ford’s Theater and saw the exhibits on the assassination there and at the Lincoln Presidential Museum in Springfield in June 2005.

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15. See McPherson, *Struggle*, pp. 308–432 for details.

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